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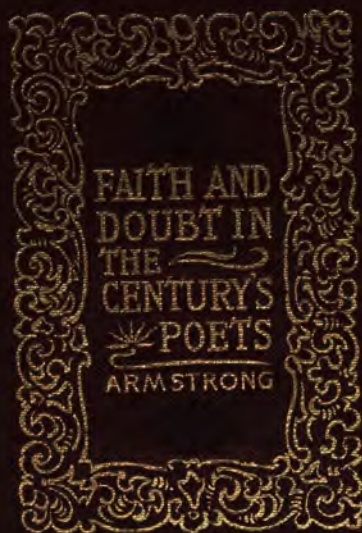
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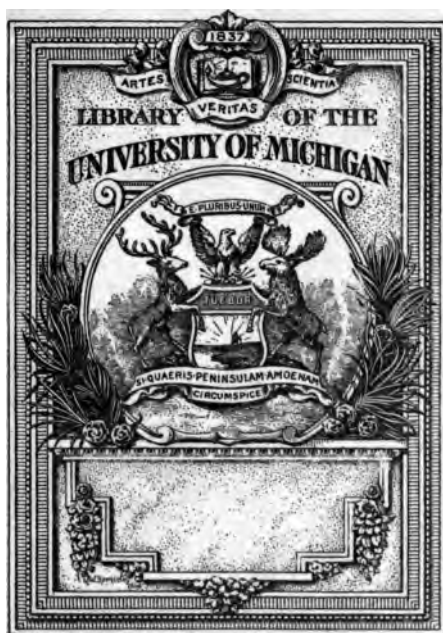
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Faith and Doubt in the Century's Poets

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BY

RICHARD A. ARMSTRONG, B.A.,

Author of "God and the Soul," "Man's Knowledge of God," &c.

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PREFACE.

THE following chapters comprise lectures delivered to my own congregation on Sunday evenings. I have somewhat modified or enlarged one or two of them, but I have not sought to erase traces of oral delivery and direct address.

In selecting six English poets representative of the religious Faith and Doubt which have contended for sway over the mind of our age, I may seem to have been somewhat arbitrary. But Byron's passionate nature little lent itself to the philosophic consideration of the profoundest themes, though Mr. Stopford Brooke has much to say on his influence in theology. Coleridge's considerable influence on religious thought was through his prose rather than his poems. Clough may seem here exalted to too august a companionship; but not so would have thought one at

longer

least of those in whose company he here appears. And his disintegrating, yet essentially religious, mind is richly characteristic of the time in which he lived.

In order of birth my series would have run:—Wordsworth (1770), Shelley (1792), Tennyson (1809), Browning (1812), Clough (1819), Arnold (1822); in order of death, Shelley (1822), Wordsworth (1850), Clough (1861), Arnold (1888), Browning (1889), Tennyson (1892). But the sequence in which I have set them fairly represents, I think, the alternate swing of denial and affirmation which marks the record of our century. We look now for some other great affirmer to arise, some poet-prophet who shall herald the brighter and surer faith of the twentieth Christian century. William Watson possesses all the ethical enthusiasm requisite, and very high poetic gifts; but, alas! the flourishing of nations steeped in crime, or seemingly indifferent to it, has undermined his faith in the moral government of the world; and the touch of the Living God with the soul of man seems to him a dream. I long

greatly that he should recover a more piercing vision and a loftier trust. Then would he worthily carry on the line of prophetic poesy.

One liberty I have taken, not without hesitation, for which I hope I may be forgiven. Into my citations from the poets I have here and there introduced *italics* of my own, to help the reader to catch the point and pith of the illustration. If this small book leads a few to the earnest study of the masters of whom it treats, it will not have been written in vain.

R. A. A.

Liverpool,
February, 1898.

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Faith and Doubt in the Century's Poets.



I.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY:

THE SPIRIT OF REVOLT.

To understand the poetry of the nineteenth century, we must understand the French Revolution of the last dozen years of the eighteenth; for that tremendous convulsion scored deep the thought and emotion of mankind, and the whole of the higher literature of Europe that has followed it might be treated largely as an evolution from that supreme event.

The French Revolution was the outburst, in one terrific moment on one devoted spot of the planet's surface, of all the passion of protest against tyranny over the lives and thoughts of men which had been gathering ever accumulating force for centuries. A people utterly bereft of all that gives worth to life, bound hand and foot, body and soul, under the tyranny of king and priest, heard the biting gibes of Voltaire, were inflamed by the sounding theories of Rousseau on the

Social Contract, and rose with one overwhelming impulse to slay oppression for ever, and establish the universal reign of the Rights of Man.

The contagion spread far and wide; all that was brave and generous in England sympathised at first with a neighbouring people's stroke for freedom. The fall of the Bastille was pronounced by no less a statesman than Fox much the greatest event that had ever occurred in history. A seed was sown in many a young English mind which should grow to a great and mighty tree. A spark was kindled in many a British heart which should spread to a consuming fire. An impulse was given to the struggle of mankind for the largest and freest life of the mind which should never again die out.

But "the mills of God grind slowly." By evolution, not revolution, His main purposes are accomplished. A violent onslaught means a quick reaction. The heralds of freedom became the demons of terror. The swing round of Edmund Burke but symbolises the reaction in the whole English people. Presently, men who had been in a delirium of delight at the levelling sweep of democracy over throne and church were crying out for the re-establishment of hierarchical and aristocratic order. In the early years of our own century it was only the voices of the

bravest and most enthusiastic that still sang songs of freedom and had faith left to prolong the strife for universal emancipation. Shelley still chanted pæans of defiance against all authority. Wordsworth turned back from his first enthusiasms to uphold the cause of order.

These two men, both sons of the Revolution, illustrate the manner of its working on souls of opposite temperament, both lovers and ministers of goodness, purity, and truth.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born in 1792, three years after the outburst of the Revolution, the year before the execution of the King of France. By family he was of the Tory squirearchy; by temperament he was democrat and heretic, protestant against all authority. Already at Eton they called him "Atheist Shelley." It is those school-days by the Thames, with the regal towers of Windsor confronting him across the river, that he describes when he writes :

And then I clasped my hands and look'd around—
But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
Which pour'd their warm drops on the sunny
ground—
So without shame I spake :—" I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
Without reproach or check." I then control'd
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek
and bold.

Picture him there in the Eton fields, the lad of twelve or fourteen summers, the organiser of revolt against the immemorial sanctity of "fagging," his slim childish figure crowned by that wealth of sunny locks to be grizzled with care and sorrow ere he was thirty; those wonderful "stag-eyes," surmounted by that arch of forehead, looking out in wonder on this complex world, the passion of revolt—less for himself than for all the wronged and oppressed—burning in his bosom, as aloof from the sports of his fellows, he dedicates himself to wisdom, justice, freedom, mildness, that he may have power to do battle with that tyranny which he already wearies to behold.

Yes, the Eton boy already incarnated that "Spirit of Revolt" alike against secular and against spiritual rule, which throbbed in the French Revolution, and still pulsed with irregular beat through the heart of Europe. The brief story of his remaining years is the story of how he gave expression to that spirit in words of imperishable music, suffusing it more and more as he mellowed and matured with that spirit of universal love and rapture in the joy of the goodness and beauty that are to be, which stamps his poetry with character transcendent in its kind over that of every rival.

A marvellous love of knowledge in this

youth, an eagerness unparalleled in communion with the gifted minds of the past. "A mighty emotion," says his Oxford friend, overtook him when for the first time he approached some book replete with the wisdom of antiquity. "His cheeks glowed, his eyes became bright, his whole frame trembled." An irregular student, of a sort not grateful to academic authority, yet reading his eighteen hours a day, and so reading that knowledge and thought soaked in at every pore throughout these tremendous vigils.

Shelley the Atheist, in mockery, at Eton; at Oxford expelled for Atheism in earnest ascribed by the authorities to his caustic pen. Then the boy and girl marriage—nineteen and sixteen—with the beautiful girl of plebeian birth, the vagrant life, the mad passion (after a few short years) of love for another of mind and attainment more akin to his own, the repudiation of his first wife in accord with principles which he had earnestly and honestly taught himself to believe in as right, but which we are agreed to be subversive of the root principles of well-ordered society, the fresh wanderings and final home in romantic Italy, sorrows and trials and cares and disappointments many, and then that crowning romance of death by the treachery of the Mediterranean waves, and the volume of Sophocles

found in one pocket of the recovered and disfigured corpse, the volume of poor Keats's sweet music in the other.

A personality of most rare quality, that of this pure singer of English undefiled. The world will not hold him innocent of offences against the moral law built up by the wisdom of the ages; but of the sweet innocence and purity of the man's soul the evidence is overwhelming. Intellectually among the rarest of the human race, striking music from his lyre in some regards superior to that of any other master of English song before or since, it yet was neither the depth and quickness of his understanding, nor the marvel of his poetry, that most impressed his familiar friends; it was the incomparable sweetness, purity, and beauty of his character. His mighty rival Byron was a scoffer at goodness, a cynic, and a *roué*, a man of the world in the basest sense, whose talk was of the unclean. But with Shelley he left these topics and conversed of themes high and pure. He was one who discredited the goodness of men; but of Shelley's purity he never really had a doubt. Where Shelley went, wantonness could not be, and what is vile shrank away abashed from his radiant presence.

What then did this gifted and glorious being teach in the childhood of the century? What was his message, unheeded in

his day save by the fewest, seized now as the watchword and inspiration of the boldest and most ardent spirits of the time? What thought he and felt he and said he concerning the deep perennial problems? What was his faith, his hope, his love?

The Spirit of Revolt was his; but, from the first, revolt for the sake of human joy and goodness. At nineteen he is declaiming for Catholic Emancipation and Repeal of the Union in the Dublin Rotunda, and scattering broadsheets of sedition from the hotel balcony, like snow-flakes, on all the wayfarers in Sackville Street. At twenty-one for the first time his principles find voice through the instrument divinely appointed to his use; and he gives—not the world—but the few friends to whom he dares send the private print, the immortal stanzas of *Queen Mab*.

Shelley afterwards severely condemned *Queen Mab* for its lack of qualities which he attained only through later thought and suffering, and he was angry when it was published without authority. Yet without *Queen Mab* we should not have known our Shelley,—for the poem presents in a naked strength and vigour, in which it never appeared again, that Spirit of Revolt which was the keynote of his being, the root and stem of that tree of poesy which he afterwards clothed with a foliage so rich and rare.

The Spirit of Revolt, — yes, revolt against every sort and manner of human authority. To *obey* a fellow-man, to *command* a fellow-man alike degrade a member of our race, since that race is created for self-determining and self-controlling life :—

Kings

And subjects, mutual foes, for ever play
A losing game into each other's hands,
Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man
Of virtuous soul commands not nor obeys.
Power, like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate'er it touches, and obedience,
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
Makes slaves of men, and of the human frame
A mechanised automaton.

Anarchic doctrine truly ! Little wonder if good Squire Shelley failed to detect the nobility that throbbed in every beat of his son's rebellious heart, or that the young poet was left by his father to scrape a living out of his sister's pocket-money !

The Spirit of Nature indeed he held to be pure and holy. It was the very passion of his idealism that lent its tremendous energy to his denunciation of every man-made law.

Nature !—no !

Kings, priests, and statesmen blast the human flower,
Even in its tender bud ; their influence darts
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
Of desolate society. . . .
Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man

Inherits vice and misery, when force
And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe,
Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.

Or hear the terrific scorn which this
frenzied youth hurls at the religious forms
in the midst of which he lives. The language is indeed the language of blank and naked atheism, but the spirit that burns within the words is the passion for freedom and righteousness and truth. In denouncing the God of the Church, the singer, whose lips have been touched with the living coal, is proclaiming the unknown God of all holiness and verity.

Then grave and hoary-headed hypocrites,
Without a hope, a passion, or a love,
Who, through a life of luxury and lies,
Have crept by flattery to the seats of power,
Support the system whence their honours flow—
They have three words; well tyrants know their
use,

Well pay them for the loan, with usury
Torn from a bleeding world!—*God, Hell, and
Heaven.*

A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty *fiend*,
Whose mercy is a nickname for the rage
Of tameless tigers hungering for blood.
Hell, a red gulf of everlasting fire,
Where poisonous and undying worms prolong
Eternal misery to those hapless slaves
Whose life has been a penance for its crimes.
And *Heaven*, a meed for those who dare belie
Their human nature, quake, believe, and cringe
Before the mockeries of earthly power.

A tremendous castigation of ecclesias-

tical religion truly,—undiscriminating as all sweeping invectives against a whole order of men have been indiscriminating from Jesus's denunciation of the Pharisees until now, and therefore unjust,—labelling two words to us most dear and holy, God and Heaven, with meanings horrible and hideous; yet, withal, the generous outburst of a noble soul striving to tear the veil from hypocrisy and lies, that sincerity and truth may live.

Such is his verdict on the Churchmen's God; yet even now in his hot-blooded youth, already the soul of him meets in glad and reverent recognition the all-holy and eternal Soul of the outspread universe, and even in this anarchic poem, lo! he lays together the stones of the temple of that Spirit of Nature which abides though theologies be shattered to the dust. Harken how he apostrophises this overruling Spirit:

Yes! when the sweeping storm of time
Has sung its death-dirge o'er the ruin'd fanes
And broken altars of the almighty fiend
Whose name usurps thy honours, and the blood
Through centuries clotted there, has floated down
The tainted flood of ages, shalt thou live
Unchangeable! A shrine is rais'd to thee,
Which, nor the tempest breath of time,
Nor the interminable flood,
Over earth's slight pageant rolling,
Availeth to destroy,—

The sensitive extension of the world.
That wondrous and eternal fane,
Where pain and pleasure, good and evil join,
To do the will of strong necessity,
And life in multitudinous shapes,
Still pressing forward where no term can be,
Like hungry and unresting flame,
Curls round the eternal columns of its strength.

Thus we have heard the impassioned cry of Revolt from the youthful poet's lips. Let us turn to the more chastened, but not less impassioned message to mankind which he embodied in the next and last decade of his stormful life.

Every true reformer, every true poet, every idealist, every prophet sees by the soul's vision one supreme goal of thought and life to which he would have all creation move. To one that goal is above all else the Good; to another it is the True; to yet a third the Beautiful. Those are the three conceptions which have supreme power over the awakened heart of man. To one or other of the three, the heart aflame with the divine fire moves as the needle to the pole. And whichever of the three it be that supremely kindles his imagination and his yearning, to him who is moved by that over-mastering desire, these three are always one.

And always two supreme articles of faith lie at the back of all his striving. The one is that somewhere—far off—hidden perhaps, yet real and ultimate, at

the foundation and consummation of all that is, this absolute Goodness, or Truth, or Loveliness has real existence ; and the other is that Man himself—however feeble, however faulty, however stained by evil, —may and shall at last attain to union with that stainless essence.

To Shelley this Ideal presented itself indeed both as the True and as the Good, but supremely and characteristically as the Beautiful ; and above and beyond his Revolt against all that is false or base or hideous in the world, his maturer poetry is all one prolonged and urgent cry to men to open their eyes and see this Ideal Beauty at the base and the crown of all things, and to cast out all that hinders their perfect union with it, which, once achieved, shall never be broken more.

And so one of his best and truest expositors sums up thus the poet's creed :

“The essential thought of Shelley's creed was that the universe is penetrated, vitalised, made real by a spirit, which he sometimes called the Spirit of Nature, but which is always conceived as more than life, as that which gives its actuality to Life, and lastly as Love and Beauty. To adore this spirit, to clasp it with affection, and to blend with it, is, he thought, the true object of man.”

It is to that most wonderful poem, the

Prometheus Unbound, that we must turn for the richest and sublimest exposition of this lofty thought.

Aeschylus, to some of us the noblest, as he was the earliest, master of the Athenian drama, had written, twenty-three centuries before, two tragedies, Prometheus Bound and Prometheus Unbound,—the first preserved to us in its incomparable sublimity and power, the latter irreparably lost in the wreckage of classical literature.

In the Prometheus Bound, Prometheus represents the spirit of mankind chained by the supreme God, Zeus, to an adamant rock in unceasing torture for having snatched fire from heaven. Shelley seizes the Hellenic legend, and in his Prometheus Unbound makes the sequel of the tale the exposition of the faith that throbs in him. His Prometheus still is bound in ceaseless agony,—and bound by Zeus or Jupiter. But the God of the churches was to Shelley the creature of the brain of man. Prometheus is himself the creator of Jupiter, and himself invested him with regal power, power abused by the god to enslave and torture his own creator. Prometheus in his anguish anathematizes the tyrant whom he himself originally enthroned. It is the protestation of enlightened men against the man-made superstitions which are the source of all the evil in the world. But even the anathemas

of the noble captive are not pure hate, but are tinted by sentiments of the universal love which is the proper nature of mankind. He recalls the vehemence of his curses, and cries,

It doth repent me: words are quick and vain :
Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

But he relaxes in no wise the undaunted steadfastness of his protest, and at last that protest takes effect. The spirit Demogorgon, who symbolises Eternity, arises from the depths where he dwells, and hurls Jupiter headlong from the skies. The bonds of Prometheus are forthwith broken. He is re-united to the lovely Asia, who symbolises nature. And the marriage of mankind to nature, the perfect harmony between the Spirit of Humanity and the Spirit of Beauty in the world, instantaneously brings about universal happiness; and the ideal beauty of the liberated world is sung by the poet in words linked to music the sweetest and most ravishing to which the English language has ever yet been formed.

Let us cull a few passages from this which his most sympathetic critic rightly pronounces our poet's masterpiece.

Here is the curse which in molten stream Prometheus poured out upon the tyrant god ere that nobler and serener temper

born of love had flowed over his stricken heart:—

Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue.

Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
Ghastly disease, and frenzying fear;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire

Lightning, and cutting hail, and legioned forms
Of furies, driving by upon the wounding storms.

Ay, do thy worst. Thou art omnipotent.
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,
And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent
To blast mankind, from yon ethereal tower.

Let thy malignant spirit move
In darkness over those I love:

On me and mine I imprecate
The utmost torture of thy hate;

And thus devote to sleepless agony,
This undeclining head while thou must reign on
high.

But thou, who art the God and Lord: O, thou
Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow
In fear and worship: all-prevailing foe!

I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse!
Till thine Infinity shall be

A robe of envenomed agony;
And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving
brain.

Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this curse,
Ill deeds, then be thou damned, beholding good;
Both infinite as is the universe,
And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.

An awful image of calm power
Though now thou sittest, let the hour
Come, when thou must appear to be
That which thou art internally.
And after many a false and fruitless crime,
Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless
space and time.

Here is a picture of redeemed humanity,
after Jupiter has fallen, and Prometheus
and mankind are free :—

But soon I looked,
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men
walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or
fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
"All hope abandon ye who enter here;"
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager
fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to
death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to
speak;
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope till there remained
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill;
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes,
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.

And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and
dew

On the wide earth, past; gentle, radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet being now, made earth like heaven; nor pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill-shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Here is the exquisite music of one of
the spirit choruses that float through the
drama, seeming as though they were
indeed voices from another and less mate-
rial world. They are the spirits of the
thoughts in the minds of men, and they
are singing to the spirits of the hours:—

We come from the mind
Of human kind,
Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind;
Now, 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion.

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss,
Whose caverns are crystal palaces;
From those skiey towers
Where Thought's crowned powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours!

From the dim recesses
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses,
From the azure isles,
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her syren wiles.

From the temples high
Of man's ear and eye,
Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy;
From the murmurings
Of the unsealed springs
Where Science bedews his Dædal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood, and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears;
We waded and flew,
And the islets were few
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness
grew.

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm;
And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies,
Which makes all it gazes on, Paradise.

Let us conclude our excerpts from Prometheus Unbound with these most noble closing lines:—

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates,
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan! is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory!

The vision of Shelley then was a world in which superstition, oppression, cruelty should all be done away, in which neither priest nor king should lord it over human

soul or body, but all human life should be sweetness, harmony, and love. To this humanity the world would present neither dangers nor difficulties. What sorrow remained inevitable should be softened to a beauty of its own. Struggle and battle should no more be the notes of human life, but affection, peace, and joy. All mankind should be rapt to eternal beauty in union with the Spirit of Nature, which is no other than the Spirit of Eternal Love.

Sometimes, indeed, a sadder air is breathed from the Shelleyan pipes. Sometimes it seems to him as though this Spirit Divine had no existence save in the dream-land of his soul. Alastor wanders through the world, driven by a yearning insatiable to find the living Soul, of which all the lavish loveliness of nature is but the symbol. But the quest is vain, and he dies exhausted by his own emotions.

But Epipsychidion—or the Oversoul—mere love-poem as it is in form, seems to have been penned in an hour of deeper faith. Here, too, the singer, like Alastor, seeks with unquenchable desire the spirit of perfect love and beauty. He clothes that spirit, it is true, in the form of a fair girl imprisoned in a convent; but as the impassioned lines sweep on, more and more do we feel that this is no earthly mistress that he woos, but the immortal spirit of

all loveliness and truth. And it is the apotheosis of the human soul, the wrapping of the human consciousness in the divine, that he foreshadows, when he writes:—

We shall become the same, we shall be one
Spirit within two frames, oh! wherefore two?
One passion in twin hearts, which grows and
grew

Till like two meteors of expanding flame,
Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
Touch, mingle, are transfigured; ever still
Burning, yet ever inconsumable.

This vision, in its stronger pulsations, involves the faith in the soul's immortality, —in the imperishability of the true and essential self,—which finds such exquisite expression in the threnody on Keats, the lovely poem of Adonais.

But we must sum up in a few brief words Shelley and the Shelleyan gospel. We get perhaps at the root of it all when we say, Love was his only law. Now Love is a beautiful and holy law, but it is not the only one for men. There is a twin-law named Duty; and Duty and Love must go hand in hand to make the perfect humanity. The pursuit of love and of love alone is, after all, the following of desire, however pure, however spiritual. And sometimes the call to us is to go against desire. But Shelley followed desire always, believing desire itself to prove the divinity of

the thing desired. He sought undoubtedly, and loved, the perfect spiritual beauty. But he was prone to think he had found this in individual women, and to throw the fervour of religion into his love of them. He held all physical beauty to be the veil of the divine; but sometimes he so dwells on the physical that the high strenuousness of the divine is lost. And we miss in him that manlier worship of the "Stern Daughter of the Voice of God," which in Wordsworth braces the reader out of the languor of mere longing into the strong mood of toil and battle.

Yet we must give to Shelley a place in the temple of humanity, where indeed he has few rivals. In lyric music no English poet, save perhaps Keats, has approached him. English as he moulds it has all the music of Italian, all the energy and stress of Greek. In presenting to the eye beauties of landscape he has all the vividness, and more than the delicacy, of the greatest landscape painters in actual colour whom the world has known. In ringing appeal for Revolt against every oppression, and every hypocrisy, and every black and cruel superstition, he has all the passion of Lowell, and a magnificence of diction which Lowell, with all his virility, never even begins to approach; while the man himself, spite of his limitations and his weaknesses, was greater than all his poems,

a spirit of purity and love which seemed to make all the world in which he dwelt more beautiful.

Heretic, yes, and anarchist! Yet would that we had to-day his passion for liberty, for justice, for truth; would that we had his faith in the purity, the beauty, the holiness of that Unseen Power which pervades and sustains the world!

II.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH:

REVELATION THROUGH NATURE AND MAN.

I KNOW that I am fore-doomed, in one sense at any rate, to make a failure of this lecture upon Wordsworth. I may interest you. I may hold your attention. I may hit on some true characteristics of Wordsworth. Above all, I may recite passages of his of inexpressible charm which can never leave a sincere soul untouched. But to compress an adequate estimate of Wordsworth into fifty minutes is not given to mortal man. He is so vast—not in the bulk of his poetry only; that were a small matter; but in the wide ocean of his thought and feeling, an ocean as deep as it is wide. He is a world, a universe. And even could one catalogue the contents of the universe, that would not be to impress its image, its totality, its unity upon the mind.

No course of lectures on the Religion of the English Poets of the Nineteenth Century could leave out Wordsworth. Neither Shelley, nor Tennyson, nor Browning would be so much missed. But Wordsworth is too great. There are some topics

of study which, as you push on, you seem to be getting to know all about. There are others in which the more you persevere the more overwhelming becomes to you the sense of your own ignorance. About "musical glasses" you can learn everything. About Shakspeare you want a lifetime to learn a little. And so in Wordsworth there are such wide-reaching stretches to be covered, such profound depths to be sounded, that the task is almost one of despair. And if with decency he could have been omitted, I would, for my very admiration and reverence for him, have omitted him from this series of addresses.

But that may not be. Let us then note that there was nothing remarkable in his early promise. Neither at school nor at college did he rise to distinction, though at school at Hawkshead he was all the while absorbing into his inmost being that lovely scenery which he was by-and-by to interpret as the very scroll of prophecy. In 1791—himself just of age, though it is the year before Shelley was born—he is in Paris in all the mad tumult of the Revolution, and almost thinks—he the poet pre-eminent of contemplation—that he is destined by nature and circumstance to play a conspicuous part in the active struggles of humanity. The passion for freedom, the generous ardour for Liberty,

Equality, Fraternity, is beating at his heart. Is the name of Wordsworth to win crimson fame in the annals of the barricades? Nay, his heart is turned sick within him at the excesses wrought in the outraged names of that famous triad; and he returns to England to roam about Somersetshire indicting verses to abbeys and rivers, and muse on the laws of versification.

We saw how Shelley was to the last dominated by the Spirit of Revolt. Revolt was quenched in Wordsworth in the red days of the Terror. And even his noblest pleadings for freedom,

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour,
were henceforth to be restrained and calmed by an overwhelming sense of the pre-eminent need of order in every transformation of the face of human society.

There in Somersetshire, just a hundred years ago, came together Wordsworth and another whom Swinburne described the other day as "one of the very greatest poets who has ever glorified mankind." This was Coleridge, two years Wordsworth's junior. And one of the most interesting events in all literary history is the publication of a joint volume of poems by these two young men.

Coleridge and Wordsworth seem each to have supplied to the other the spark of

inspiration. Each found in the mind of the other a rich store of sympathy and intellectual companionship. And great as Coleridge is, it must ever be his greatest honour that it was he and Dorothy, Wordsworth's sister, who supplied to the opening mind of the supreme poet of our century the atmosphere, the sunshine, the stimulus needed for the full blossoming of his genius.

Yes; the supreme poet of our century. Wordsworth has written and published an amount of feeble and wearisome doggerel which is amazing, and which must have stifled and destroyed the fame of any other poet; and much which is not doggerel will seem so unless we approach it in a mood of great patience and unfailing reverence; but his greatest utterances are so great that in their kind they are absolutely unrivalled in the world's literature; they are wholly unique; they are prophecies in a new Scripture; they are a new evangel for mankind; they are the Bible of a new and larger faith which was to destroy the narrow creeds of the established Christianity; they constitute, perhaps, the mightiest single intellectual influence of the nineteenth century; the only possible rival being that illuminating and penetrating conception associated with the splendid name of Darwin.

And this body of revealing poetry Words-

worth produced steadily, steadfastly, undauntedly, with quiet certainty that his thought and his verse were great, amid the jeers and scorn of all the great critics of the day, led by the gibes of Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review*, who had no better greeting for the noble utterances of the new seer than "This will never do." Through all those long years of scorn Wordsworth lived and laboured. From the neighbourhood of the Mendips and the Quantocks he early made migration to that romantic region to be evermore associated with his name. Coleridge and Southey were at hand, and they too were to be counted among the little band to whom in derision the name "Lake Poets" was affixed; and they too were to have their share in transforming the nick-name thrust on them by the mockers into an epitaph of immortal glory. But Wordsworth was the king; and it is his spirit that seems to haunt every crag and rivulet of that consecrated region, and to endow it with a human soul.

The man who cheerfully wrote on amid such flippant comment as killed poor Keats, enjoyed with a frank serenity, when his day of recognition came, the fame and reverence which swelled to so great a volume before he died.

But we must leave the outer man and strive, so far as may be, to state and illus-

trate the essence of the inner man, to analyse and exhibit his message to his day and to the centuries to come.

It has often been remarked that nothing that Jesus taught was new. The sentiments of the Sermon on the Mount are to be found scattered through Hebrew and even through Pagan literature. "Not," says a living writer, "the isolated expression of moral ideas, but their fusion into a whole, in one memorable personality, is that which connects them for ever with a single name." The Sermon on the Mount was a new Gospel to mankind because it gathered into focus and illuminated with the passion of a transcendent soul truths and maxims which had lain strewn about neglected in the literature of the world. And in the same manner, even if Wordsworth's thoughts may be matched from scattered dicta of prior poets, the Lines composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, to quote his own cumbrous title, were a new revelation for all such as had ears to hear and souls to understand. As the young man wrote those undying lines, he became, in the face of the dry, dogmatic, narrow Christianity of the day, the prophet, the creator of a new faith of the highest spiritual quality which, in the elect spirits of mankind, should fuse itself into one whole with the essence of the Christianity of Christ.

What then was the characteristic, the essential nature of this new faith? To put it into the fewest words it was this: In outward Nature Wordsworth beheld the face of God reflected; and reflected there also he beheld the mind of man; and Nature became to him the medium through which the mind of God and the mind of man met together, and Divinity and Humanity communed.

Yes; regarded almost universally as supremely the poet of Nature, Wordsworth was in a still deeper sense the poet of Man. But as the astronomer fixes his eye, not on the star he would especially observe, but on another lying a little to the side, knowing that thus he will most clearly and truly see the object of his research, so Wordsworth did not direct his gaze on man, but at field and wood and sea, that there he might read

The still, sad music of humanity.

Wordsworth's revulsion from the stiff and stilted style of Pope was not more marked than his recoil from his method of approach to the citadel of the human soul.

The proper study of mankind is man,
said Pope, and proceeded to analyse his subject like a surgeon cutting up a body.

The mind of man:

My haunt, and the main region of my song,
sang Wordsworth, and gazed into the

deep mirror of sky and lake and ocean, from
that reflection to deduce, as he declares,

Men as they are men within themselves.

Wordsworth then follows Plato in the high doctrine that there are other sources whence we can acquire insight into the mysterious reality of things than the pure reasoning of dialectic. And he adds to the sundry sources which Plato enumerates the contemplation of Nature as enabling us to see into the life of things and the mind both of man and of God. But by the very fact that he does not appeal to a faculty where the argument can be checked and proved, as in mathematics or in logic, his appeal can only be to, and the response can only come from, those whose inward being comprises a like sensitiveness to his own; a limitation which is as true of the spiritual teachings of Jesus of Nazareth as of those of the bard of Grasmere. Unless we too have vision for

The light which never was on sea or land,
and sense of that

Presence which disturbs him with the joy of
elevated thoughts,

we may read and scan his lines indeed,
but for us he sings in vain.

Wordsworth reads then in natural scenery something more than is seen of the outward eye. He finds a living soul

behind the silent face of Nature. And so he murmurs, as he gazes upon a sunset of extraordinary splendour and beauty,

No sound is uttered,—but a deep
And solemn harmony pervades
The hollow vale from steep to steep,
And penetrates the glades.
Far-distant images draw nigh,
Called forth by wondrous potency
Of beamy radiance, that imbues
Whate'er it strikes, with gem-like hues
In vision exquisitely clear,
Herds range along the mountain side;
And glistening antlers are descried;
And gilded flocks appear.
Thine is the tranquil hour, purpureal eve!
But long as god-like wish, or hope divine,
Informs my spirit, ne'er can I believe
That this magnificence is wholly thine!
From worlds not quickened by the sun
A portion of the gift is won;
An intermingling of heaven's pomp is spread
On ground which British shepherds tread!

To behold this mystic mingling of spiritual being with the rude clods of earth, you must indeed be of pure and unselfish soul. Self-centred you can never see it. Pride will blind the eyes, and you must know yourself as of very humble rank in the scale of things, ere you can understand.

If thou be one whose heart the holy forms
Of young imagination have kept pure,
Stranger! henceforth be warned; and know that
pride,
Howe'er disguised in its own majesty,
Is littleness; that he who feels contempt

For any living thing, hath faculties
Which he has never used ; that thought with him
Is in its infancy. The man whose eye
Is ever on himself doth look on one,
The least of nature's works, one who might move
The wise man to that scorn which wisdom holds
Unlawful ever. O be wiser thou !
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love,
True dignity abides with him alone
Who, in the silent hour of inward thought,
Can still suspect, and still revere himself,
In lowliness of heart.

And you must bring, too, to this cult,
in spite of all sadness of the spirit, and
the minor key to which so much of the
music of human life is set, a recognition
of, and a self-forgetful responsiveness to,
the pure and innocent joyousness of nature,
without which you can have no true sym-
pathy with what she has to teach. This
carolling rapture in the very bliss of being
finds immortal expression in the famous
lines to a Skylark, and we must recite
them if we would put ourselves in tune
for the Wordsworth Gospel.

Up with me ! up with me into the clouds !
For thy song, lark, is strong ;
Up with me ! up with me into the clouds !
Singing, singing,
With clouds and sky about thee ringing,
Lift me, guide me till I find
That spot which seems so to thy mind.
I have walked through wildernesses dreary,
And to-day my heart is weary ;
Had I now the wings of a faery
Up to thee would I fly.

There is madness about thee, and joy divine
 In that song of thine ;
 Up with me, up with me, high and high
 To thy banqueting-place in the sky !

Joyous as morning,
 Thou art laughing and scorning ;
 Thou hast a nest for thy love and thy rest,
 And, though little troubled with sloth,
 Drunken lark ! thou wouldst be loth
 To be such a traveller as I.

Happy, happy liver,
 With a soul as strong as a mountain river,
 Pouring out praise to the almighty Giver,
 Joy and jollity be with us both !

Alas ! my journey, rugged and uneven,
 Through prickly moors or dusty ways must wind ;
 But hearing thee, or others of thy kind,
 As full of gladness and as free of heaven,
 I, with my fate contented, will plod on,
 And hope for higher raptures, when life's day is
 done.

Yes, there is joy in the heart of the
 natural world. The sky-lark trills it from
 the blue vault of heaven. It nods in the
 daffodil's saucy head ;

And 'tis my faith that every flower
 Enjoys the air it breathes.

The soul, which is one but many, a multi-
 plicity in unity, is in all things—

In all things, in all natures, in the stars
 Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
 In flow'r and tree, in every pebbly stone
 That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
 The moving waters and the invisible air.

From link to link
 It circulates, the soul of all the worlds.

But now this comes home to men differently according to their age. And in the great classic poem composed on re-visiting the Wye after the lapse of years, Wordsworth shows what he deems the difference between the insight of buoyant youth and that of maturer manhood.

To read a substantial extract from this poem will be worth more than many comments.

These beauteous forms,

he sings, as he gazes on the winding river
with its overhanging woods,

Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye :
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart ;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration :—feelings, too,
Of unremembered pleasure : such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime ; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened :—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep

In body, and become a living soul :
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh ! how oft—
In darkness, and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight ; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart,—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye ! Thou wanderer through the
 woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee !

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished
thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again :
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was
when first

I came among these hills ; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led : more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion : the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their *colours* and their *forms*, were then to me
An appetite : a feeling and a love,

That had no need of a remoter charm,
By *thought* supplied, or any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed, for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and *in the mind of man*:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I
still

A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear, both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

As a youth, you perceive, if you have
inhaled the essence of these incomparable
lines, it had been the simple joy of nature
that ravished his heart. It was what he
heard and saw with outward ear and eye.
But now he reads a deeper meaning, hears

a voice within the murmuring brook, beholds a look behind the surface of the woods and groves, which could not reach him earlier. Here, in the consecrated shrines of nature, the music is "the still, sad music of humanity," made all beautiful in its sadness, so that one would not change it, if one could, for the trill of the skylark's bliss; and one knows that this music is not human music only, but is the solemn chant of the living Spirit of God.

Yes, this Unseen Spirit, human and divine at once, wakes in every change of day and night, and in the sunset on the bosom of the sea:—

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free;
The holy time is quiet as a nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven is on the sea:
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.

Let me fall back on one more great and classic utterance of the seer ere I once more attempt to sum up his teaching in one or two prosaic sentences. It is from *The Excursion*, and after describing the boyhood of the Wanderer, who is the hero of that vast poem, it describes how, as he drew towards manhood, revelation came to him in the glorious rising of the sun above hill and sea.

Such was the boy—but for the growing youth,
What soul was his, when, from the naked top
Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He
looked—

Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean's liquid mass, beneath him lay
In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were
touched,

And in their silent faces did he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy: his spirit drank
The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form
All melted into him: they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live; they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power
That made him; it was blessedness and love!
A herdsman on the lonely mountain tops,
Such intercourse was his, and in this sort
Was his existence oftentimes *possessed*.
Oh, then how beautiful, how bright appeared
The written promise! Early had he learned
To reverence the volume that displays
The mystery, the life which cannot die;
But in the mountains did he *feel* his faith.
Responsive to the writing, all things there
Breathed immortality, revolving life,
And greatness still revolving; infinite;
There littleness was not; the least of things
Seemed infinite; and there his spirit shaped
Her prospects, nor did he believe,—he *saw*.
What wonder if his being thus became
Sublime and comprehensive! Low desires,

Low thoughts had there no place; yet was his
heart
Lowly; for he was meek in gratitude,
Oft as he called these ecstasies to mind
And whence they flowed; and from them he
acquired
Wisdom, which works through patience; thence
he learned,
In oft-recurring hours of sober thought,
To look on nature with a humble heart,
Self-questioned where it did not understand,
And with a superstitious eye of love.

Wordsworth has been reproached for crooning away his years in a country village instead of battling for truth and righteousness on the arenas where vast populations seethe. It is a wholly unworthy reproach. He drew his inspiration, it is true, from murmuring Rotha and the scarp of Langdale Pykes. But his message has gone forth, strengthening the thews of the soul, to men contending for the right wherever the warfare rages hottest. And this leads us to the strong and pregnant sense of Duty in which, to me, at least, he seems to contrast so favourably with love-intoxicated Shelley.

Had the man who wrote this sonnet no trumpet-note for the fighters of the world?

O'er the wide earth, on mountain and on plain,
Dwells in the affections and the soul of man
A Godhead, like the universal Pan,
But more exalted, with a brighter train.
And shall his bounty be dispensed in vain,
Showered equally on city and on field,

And neither hope nor steadfast promise yield
In these usurping times of fear and pain?
Such doom awaits us. Nay, forbid it, Heaven!
We know the arduous strife, the eternal laws
To which the triumph of all good is given,
High sacrifice, and labour without pause,
Even to the death:—else wherefore should the eye
Of man converse with immortality?

Was he who strove thus to call Robert
Haydon to a sense of the responsibility of
art, merely mooning his time away in
rustic self-indulgence? Listen to his
counsel to that wayward painter:

High is our calling, friend!—Creative art
(Whether the instrument of words she use,
Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues),
Demands the service of a mind and heart,
Though sensitive, yet, in their weakest part,
Heroically fashioned—to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely muse,
While the whole world seems adverse to desert.
And oh! when nature sinks, as oft she may,
Through long-lived pressure of obscure distress,
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
And in the soul admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness;
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard!

Do you not hear the solemn roll of the
drum summoning to battle in this patriot-
call?

It is not to be thought of that the flood
Of British freedom, which, to the open sea
Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity
Hath flowed, "with pomp of waters unwithstood,"
Roused though it be full often to a mood

Which spurns the check of salutary bands,
That this most famous stream in bogs and sands
Should perish; and to evil and to good
Be lost for ever. In our halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible knights of old:
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake: the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held. In everything we are sprung
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

Add to sonnets such as these the mighty trumpet-call that pealed from the hills encircling Grasmere in the incomparable "Ode to Duty," and you have your answer ready, and more than ready, for him who lays against Wordsworth the indictment that he mused the years away in idle meditation instead of doing his stroke for the reinforcement of the powers of righteousness in the world of men.

Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Childhood," held by many to be the sublimest Ode in our tongue, if not the sublimest ever written, I pass by, because I am wholly unable to accept its philosophy of a pre-existence which has left dim memories in the soul of the little child. I rather hold that the imperious instinct of immortality in the breast of Wordsworth was the source of this fanciful philosophy, than that the philosophy was the root of the belief.

I must draw to a close. Let me follow the high authority of Stopford Brooke in

summing up what Wordsworth had to teach.

He taught, first, the unity of humanity. There is the same God over the Idiot Boy as over Plato or St. Paul. The same heart is in the simplest as the noblest. And so the theology which divides men into two camps for one of which God cares, while for the other He cares not, is stricken at its roots.

He tolerates no longer the idea of God as a Creator outside Nature, but sees the Divine Energy and Love in every throbbing fibre of the universe, and so anticipates that transcendental theology which, after so many doubts, is just beginning to beat its music out.

He thinks of God as conscious of Himself "at every point of nature's being," and also in nature as a whole.

And as he also thinks of God as realising a personality in every human being, he conceives and declares a sympathy of thought, of mood, of feeling between nature and man which has its roots in the very essence of things, and so makes nature the great revealer to man both of his own inmost self and of the eternal God. It is a mystic Gospel, but one that has inspiration and strength and joy and peace unspeakable for every soul that, through humility, truthfulness, and reverence, can attain to it and hold it.

III.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH:

BETWEEN THE OLD FAITH AND THE NEW.

ON New Year's Day, 1819, three years before the death of Shelley, and when Wordsworth was nearly fifty and Tennyson was in his tenth year, there was born, in the city of Liverpool, Arthur Hugh, son of James Butler Clough, cotton-merchant. When he was four years old he was taken with his parents to live at Charleston, United States, in "a large, ugly red brick house near the sea." But at nine he was sent back to England to a preparatory school at Chester, and at ten he went to Rugby to spend seven years under the powerful moulding influence of Arnold, the maker of the modern English Public School. His family returned later on to England, and he spent many of his vacations with them in Liverpool.

A lad of fine physique, famous in the annals of Rugby football as "the best goal-keeper on record," and capable a few years afterwards of walking his fifty miles in a day, Clough nevertheless took but a secondary interest in the athletic side of life. He was keenly intellectual and was

ready for Arnold's famous "Sixth" a full year before his time. But above all, he was moulded by Arnold into a moral and religious earnestness of great intensity, together with a passionate belief in Rugby and Arnoldism as the saving and redeeming element in English life. When ready for college his one thought was which University would make the best centre from which old Rugbeians could turn the world to their way of thinking, and make good Churchmanship the general foundation of good citizenship in the world of men.

So he goes up to Oxford with the Balliol Scholarship—the finest introduction a brilliant youth can have to the University career—there to be the intimate associate of Ward and Jowett, of Matthew Arnold and his brother, and others, the most talented undergraduates and graduates of his day. What part may not such a youth so placed hope to play in the intellectual, social, and religious history of his time?

A comely youth of more than common stature, with ample, dark, soft hair, brilliant complexion, and eyes that shone and sparkled with animation.

And yet there were elements in his training as applied to one of his peculiar constitution which were not perhaps altogether happy. "Arnold spoilt the Public

Schools," cries his "uncle," commenting on Dipsychus, the most serious of Clough's longer poems. "Why didn't he flog them and hold his tongue? Flog them he did, but why preach?" And undoubtedly one may preach more than is good to growing youths, since self-consciousness in the young is the enemy of noble doing and self-forgetful devotion.

We shall see presently that the young Balliol Scholar suffered no little as the years went by from what can only be called a morbid conscientiousness, an introspective habit which cut at the roots of action and planted a lurking scepticism as an enfeebling parasite in the very fibre of his faith. It was his misfortune that when he should have been giving at least three-fourths of his mind to Latin and Greek, he was giving full five-sixths of it to continuous speculation in theology and philosophy without gaining any clear light or any of that virile force of conviction which is necessary in every man who is to be a power in the world.

The young Rugbeian came up to Oxford to turn all Oxford to discipleship to the Broad Churchmanship of Arnold, and lo! the University was in the grip of a mightier influence than Arnold's. John Henry Newman was rising rapidly into the full orb of his amazing power. The sacerdotal theory of religion, the authority

of the Church as the only criterion of truth was in the air; and young Clough was caught in the whirl of the controversy and was driven in upon himself in question after question as to the true basis of his faith. The result was a loosening of all his certainties, and a pathetic beating about for spiritual and intellectual anchorage which is portrayed over and over again in his verse.

This was the wreckage of Clough's career. From sacerdotalism his whole nature was repelled. But while religious instincts were strong in him—perhaps the strongest element in his nature,—and he loved purity and goodness with all his heart, he could find no intellectual foundation whatever for a positive faith. And so the brilliant young Rugbeian, he who was to have been the persuasive Apostle of Arnold's gospel, drifted into the open sea of doubt, and suffered torment longing to believe, yet with perversest ingenuity questioning continually every incipient conviction that strove to establish itself in his mind.

“Between the Old Faith and the New:” all the old foundations were broken up. It was not given to him to plant firm faith upon the new. His was too curious a mind to rest in Wordsworth's mystic revelations. Whenever the higher mysteries seemed to open out before him, haunting,

often mocking, doubts pressed clamorous on to the arena of his consciousness. And "We cannot know" became the prevailing note of all his song.

His outward career is the pathetic commentary on this inward history. He whom all his contemporaries counted certain to take a commanding place in the higher life of England sank into comparative insignificance. He began by failing of that First Class, which was the undoubted meed due to his knowledge and ability. He went on always hoping, longing to do some great thing, yet never doing it. For years he held his tutorship and fellowship, doubting whether he ought not to give them up since he no longer held the faith supposed to be their indispensable condition. At last he resigned them both, but not to give his splendid talents work to do for any high ends outside the circle of the University. One petty appointment after another he held—petty, that is, in comparison with what his intellectual endowments qualified him for,—but always questioning whether this was or was not what he ought to be at. At last peace seems to have come to him only by giving up finally and for ever all such noble ambitions for the bettering of the world as had inspired his early youth, quietly settling down into a useful, if somewhat narrow, Government office, and taking all

his joy from the homely love of wife and children.

And yet this was a good man, a religious man, of whom I have been speaking, a man far better and more religious than many who have shone conspicuous as patriots and heroes, a man in the highest degree lovable, a man who inspired others to a strenuousness of which he himself failed, a man whose intellect was held in honour by the most intellectual. The pathetic note about him is that through all the complex folds and windings of his scepticism there ran, not only a heartfelt longing to believe, but a persistent conviction that somewhere, somehow there is a faith which is true and good and strong, and which man shall believe when the time for it has come. The shams, the hypocrisies, the platitudes, the ignorances of professed religion had destroyed religious faith for his generation, it seemed to him; and he found his own soul blank of a definite faith; yet at the back of his consciousness ever lay *an inexpugnable faith in faith*; and his poems seem to me the dim, sad prophecy of the Larger Hope, and the Faith Triumphant, which were already beginning to find their music in the poesy of Tennyson and Browning.

And there is another note, besides this touching faith in faith, that moves me to exceeding sympathy with Arthur Clough.

His own temptation was to be for ever listening with folded hands for the whispering voices of the Spirit. And there are poems of his in which he beautifully pleads for this still and silent and inactive mood of listening and waiting. But he recognised the danger of even so highly spiritualised a *dolce far niente*, and often answers his own musings with quite a Carlylean call to men to work; work though your labour be for nought or seeming so; for work is the only certain tonic for the soul.

Let us hear him in either mood. Here, amongst his Early Poems, is, I think, the most beautiful of all the passages in which he pleads for the still listening for the inmost music of the soul:—

Are there not, then, two musics unto men?—
 One loud and bold and coarse,
 And overpowering still perforce
 All tone and tune beside;
 Yet in despite its pride
 Only of fumes of foolish fancy bred,
 And sounding solely in the sounding head:
 The other, soft and low,
 Stealing whence we not know,
 Painfully heard, and easily forgot,
 With pauses oft and many a silence strange
 (And silent oft it seems, when silent it is not),
 Revivals too of unexpected change:
 Haply thou think'st 'twill never be begun,
 Or that 't has come, and been, and passed away:
 Yet turn to other none,—
 Turn not, oh, turn not thou!

But listen, listen, listen,—if haply be heard it may;
Listen, listen, listen,—is it not sounding now?

Here, again, and it is in his young
Undergraduate days, he would break off
from enfeebling musings, and do a bit of
work in the tumultuous world:—

Heav'n grant the manlier heart, that timely, ere
Youth fly, with life's real tempest would be coping;
The fruit of dreamy hoping
Is, waking, blank despair.

Yes, there is health in work, and sure
to be some reward, though no mortal man
can tell what that reward may be.
Suppress your doubts and get to work:—

Whate'er you dream with doubt possess't,
Keep, keep it snug within your breast,
And lay you down and take your rest;
Forget in sleep the doubt and pain,
And when you wake, to work again.
The wind it blows, the vessel goes,
And where and whither, no one knows.

'Twill all be well: no need of care;
Tho' how it will, and when, and where,
We cannot see, and can't declare.
In spite of dreams, in spite of thought,
'Tis not in vain, and not for nought,
The wind it blows, the ship it goes,
Though where and whither, no one knows.

And yet, poor storm-tossed soul! he is
haunted all the while by doubt whether,
after all, he ought not to be preaching his
doubts on the house-tops; and I think he
is trying to persuade his own tormented
spirit, quite as much as his reader, that

“’tis not in vain,” and “’twill all be well.”

Indeed, the bulk of Clough's poetry is a constant ringing of the changes on the theme that we ought to listen for that music soft and low in the abysses of the soul which is the true voice of God amid the clanging din of the restless world, and the other theme that such dreaming may be all mere self-delusion, and that we ought at all costs to gird our loins and get to work. But inasmuch as no man can work worthily in this world of God's unless there burn in him the stimulating fire of some great and clear conviction, he himself was tossed helplessly between the two ideals, and, on the one hand, never attained the rapt vision of the seer; on the other, never wrought one great thing for the bettering of mankind.

Hear the despairing cry of the youth of twenty-two, but five years gone since with the great practical ideals of Arnold's Rugby throbbing in his veins, he came up to that microcosmic world which centres round the colleges of Oxford:—

How often sit I, poring o'er
My strange, distorted youth,
Seeking in vain, in all my store,
One feeling based on truth;
Amid the maze of petty life
A clue whereby to move,
A spot whereon to toil and strife
To dare to rest and love.

So constant as my heart would be,
So fickle as it must,
'Twere well for others as for me
'Twere dry as summer dust.
Excitements come, and act and speech
Flow freely forth ;—but no,
Nor they, nor aught beside can reach
The buried world below.

The midnight stars, to other men of
lofty soul an inspiration and delight,
chanting to them in the solemn music of
the spheres high purposes to be fulfilled
in the strength of the living God who
holds the heavens together, seemed to him
but to reproach his feeble hesitancy and
his failure to keep the promise of past
hours of resolution. And so he would
fain creep within the folds of darkness,
and be hidden from their penetrating
gaze :—

O kind protecting Darkness ! as a child
Flies back to bury in its mother's lap
His shame and his confusion, so to thee,
O Mother Night, come I ! Within the folds
Of thy dark robe hide thou me close ; for I
So long, so heedless, with external things
Have played the liar, that whate'er I see,
E'en these white glimmering curtains, yon bright
stars

Which to the rest rain comfort down, for me
Smiling those smiles, which I may not return,
Or frowning frowns of fierce triumphant malice,
As angry claimants or expectants, sure
Of that I promised and may not perform,
Look me in the face ! O hide me, Mother Night !

Clough's university days fell at a period

when many able men were inclined to a gospel of physiology,—when, under the stress of the revelation of the correspondence of minute shiftings of brain-molecules with spiritual exaltation and depression, there were some who said that the whole life of the soul was but the reflection of physiological processes in the blood and the nerve, and that therefore faith, imagination, poesy, and prayer—all those elements which give life God-like quality and worth—are but the vain mirage of a materialistic world. Such teaching haunted Clough. What if it were true? The soul in him revolted. It seemed to him no better than an evangel wrought in hell. And yet what knew he by which he could contradict it? If it were true, then how base and cruel the gods who thus deluded man!

Is it true, ye gods, who treat us
As the gambling fool is treated;
O ye, who ever cheat us,
And let us feel we're cheated!
Is it true that poetical power,
The gift of heaven, the dower
Of Apollo and the Nine,
The inborn sense, "the vision and the faculty
divine,"
All we glorify and bless
In our rapturous exaltation,
All invention, and creation,
Exuberance of fancy, and sublime imagination,
All a poet's fame is built on,
The fame of Shakespeare, Milton,
Of Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley,

Is in reason's grave precision,
Nothing more, nothing less,
Than a peculiar conformation,
Constitution, and condition
Of the brain and of the belly?
Is it true, ye gods who cheat us?
And that's the way ye treat us?

But, no, he must ever return to his faith that though for him, unhappily, and for many of his day, there be no certain faith, none the less a faith there surely is, hidden as yet in the thick darkness, and undiscernible by man, which yet shall shine forth in more blessed days, and give to man the joy, the inspiration, the high, sustaining purpose without which human life is no better than a shabby, shoddy tragedy.

He remembers how of old, when Moses was hidden in the dark gloom of Sinai, the people made them a golden calf, and the shout went up, "These be thy gods, O Israel." Yet all the while the awful God was giving to Moses revelation of a faith purer, loftier, larger than ever yet the world had known. And is there, thought he, even now no God behind the thick veil of cloud, communicating to chosen souls the faith that is to be?

O wait, ye people, wait. It is true as yet ye cannot know, ye cannot see. But reject these priestly doctrines that are thrust on you. Join not the recreant

clamour round the golden calf. Wait till the light at last shall burst from Sinai's peak, and the word that is to be find proclamation in the soul of man !

And so in his poem “The New Sinai,” he sings :—

'Tis but the cloudy darkness dense ;
 Though blank the tale it tells,
 No God, no Truth ! yet He, in sooth,
 Is there—within it dwells ;
 Within the sceptic darkness deep
 He dwells that none may see,
 Till idol forms and idol thoughts
 Have passed and ceased to be :
 No God, no Truth ! ah, though in sooth
 So stand the doctrine's half :
 On Egypt's track return not back,
 Nor own the Golden Calf.

Take better part, with manlier heart,
 Thine adult spirit can ;
 No God, no Truth, receive it ne'er—
 Believe it ne'er—O Man !
 But turn not then to seek again
 What first the ill began ;
 No God, it saith ; ah, wait in faith
 God's self-completing plan ;
 Receive it not, but leave it not
 And wait it out, O Man !

“The man that went the cloud within
 Is gone and vanished quite ;
 He cometh not,” the people cries,
 “Nor bringeth God to sight :
 Lo, these thy gods, that safety give,
 Adore, and keep the feast !”
 Deluding and deluded cries
 The Prophet's brother-Priest ;
 And Israel all bows down to fall
 Before the gilded beast.

Devout, indeed ! that priestly creed,
O Man, reject as sin ;
The clouded hill attend thou still,
And him that went within.
He yet shall bring some worthy thing
For waiting souls to see :
Some sacred word that he hath heard
Their light and life shall be ;
Some lofty part, than which the heart
Adopt no nobler can,
Thou shalt receive, thou shalt believe,
And thou shalt do, O Man !

Yes, not only on cloud-capped scarp of Sinai, but even in the breasts of men down here upon the plain, surely there is God, if only they could read their own secret souls. The mischief comes, perhaps, from trying to drag this hidden Deity out from his shrine in the inmost spirit of man, to define, describe, and name ; since any language of the tongue, nay even any thinking of the mind, is inadequate and unfit to shape Him as he truly is and give Him form. And so the poet renounces every attempt to think God out ; nay, is willing even to forgo all conscious feeling that He is there, if only God will still silently remain there in the sanctuary of his being, swaying by His power the human hand, guiding, all unknown, the human mind.

O Thou, whose image in the shrine
Of human spirits dwells divine ;
Which from that precinct once conveyed,

To be to outer day displayed,
Doth vanish, part, and leave behind
Mere blank and void of empty mind,
Which wilful fancy seeks in vain
With casual shapes to fill again !

O Thou, that in our bosom's shrine
Dost dwell, unknown because divine !
I thought to speak, I thought to say,
" The light is here," " behold the way,"
" The voice was thus," and " thus the word,"
And " thus I saw," and " that I heard,"—
But from the lips that half essayed
The imperfect utterance fell unmade.

O Thou, in that mysterious shrine
Enthroned, as I must say, divine !
I will not frame one thought of what
Thou mayest either be or not.
I will not prate of " thus " and " so,"
And be profane with " yes " and " no,"
Enough that in our soul and heart
Thou, whatsoe'er Thou may'st be, art.

Unseen, secure, in that high shrine
Acknowledged present and divine,
I will not ask some upper air,
Some future day to place Thee there ;
Nor say, nor yet deny, such men
And women saw Thee thus and then :
Thy name was such, and there or here
To him or her Thou did'st appear.

Do only Thou in that dim shrine,
Unknown or known, remain, divine ;
There, or if not, at least in eyes
That scan the fact that round them lies,
The hand to sway, the judgment guide,
In *sight* and *sense* Thyself divide :
Be Thou but *there*,—in *soul* and *heart*
I will not ask to feel Thou art.

But we must not close without some reference to the chief gravely serious poem of any extended length.

"Dipsychus"—the double soul—was not published till after the poet's death. It had not received his finishing touches. Yet it represents, I think, his inmost heart; and it is, I take it, characteristic of his sensitive shrinking from expression of these deeper things that he interleaves it with the caustic comments of "my uncle," a worldly old gentleman of the old school, lest it should be thought he is not conscious of its somewhat morbid strain.

Dipsychus is a youth, like Clough himself, conscious of the higher motions of the spirit, yet haunted always by doubts of the truth or worth of these nobler promptings. And that haunting ghost within himself is represented by an attendant spirit who ever meets his sighs and rhapsodies, yes, and his resolves and prayers, with mocking comment, till true purpose melts away under the damning sneers of the spirit of the world, with its unbelief in pure ideals, its base suggestions of the lower things.

Hearken to the yearnings of the youth's better soul for emancipation from the degrading influence of this too faithful attendant on his moods.

O moon and stars, forgive! and thou, clear heaven,
Look pureness back into me. Oh, great God!

Why, why, in wisdom and in grace's name,
And in the name of saints and saintly thoughts,
Of mothers, and of sisters, and chaste wives,
And angel woman-faces we have seen,
And angel woman-spirits we have guessed,
And innocent sweet children, and pure love,
Why did I ever one brief moment's space
But parley with this filthy Belial?

Was it the fear
Of being behind the world, which is the wicked?

But the tempter answers him according
to his folly. Will he, indeed, with his
talents and his wealth, throw himself away
in vapouring pieties which the world will
assuredly set down to weak effeminacy?

Sp. Come, then,
And with my aid go into good society.
Life little loves, 'tis true, this peevish piety;
E'en they with whom it thinks to be securest—
Your most religious, delicatest, purest—
Discern, and show as pious people can
Their feeling that you are not *quite a man*.

Who are the pious people? Who are
these that believe in God and high ideals?
Not strong men or men of the world;

But country folks who live beneath
The shadow of the steeple;
The parson and the parson's wife,
And mostly married people;

Youths green and happy in first love,
So thankful for illusion;
And men caught out in what the world
Calls guilt, in first confusion;

And almost every one when age,
Disease, or sorrows strike him,

Inclines to think there is a God,
Or something very like Him.

Presently Dipsychus throws off his morbid doubts by a brave plunge into the open sea; and as the blood tingles in him after that tonic bathe, the hesitancy seems all to slip away, and he feels himself a man in a God-made world:

And I will taste again the old joy
I gloried in so when a boy;
Aha! come, come—great waters, roll!
Accept me, take me, body and soul!
That's done me good. It grieves me though,
I never came here long ago.

Ah, but can a revulsion that only comes of the quicker throbbing of the blood be, indeed, a reliable revelation of the truth of things? Comes again the mocking voice:

Pleasant, perhaps; however, no offence,
Animal spirits are not common sense;
They're good enough as an assistance,
But in themselves a poor existence.
But you, with this one bathe, no doubt,
Have solved all questions out and out.

—lines which have all the satanic ring of passages in the *Peer Gynt* of Henrik Ibsen.

So again, quite in the Ibsen manner, when for a moment in his vacillation the youth vows he will follow the worldly prompting, yet hesitates to give up all religion:—

Sp. Oh,
You'll go to church of course, you know ;
Or at the least will take a pew
To send your wife and servants to.
Trust me, I make a point of that ;
No infidelity, that's flat. ⁴

And so once more the impish spirit :

As your good father did before you,
And as the mother who first bore you.
O yes ! a child of heavenly birth !
But yet it *was* born too on *earth*.
Keep your new birth for that far day
When in the grave your bones you lay,
All with your kindred and connection,
In hopes of happy resurrection.
But how meantime to live is fit,
Ask common sense ; and what says it ?
Submit, submit !

Then even the sense of wasted life comes
in to plead on the side of the lower choice ;
and Dipsychus turns to the spirit, who at
least will give him occupation, and pro-
poses to come to terms :—

Twenty-one past—twenty-five coming on ;
One-third of life departed, nothing done.
Out of the mammon of unrighteousness
That we make friends, the Scripture is express.
My Spirit, come, we will agree ;
Content, you'll take a moiety.

In the poem Dipsychus yields at last.
But the poet knows well that it is a fatal
choice. And with true tragic power he
draws the curtain aside from the life of
the man thirty years after, loaded with all
the honours that the world can give, yet

drawing his last breath in that agony which comes when the sin of early manhood has at last, by the awful law that is above the world, found the old man out.

But Clough shall strike for us a grander chord for the last. What if believing itself makes sublime thoughts true? At any rate, it is believing that ennobles manhood and sustains men in the life of pure and lofty hope:—

Hope evermore and believe, O man, for e'en as thy
thought

So are the things that thou see'st; e'en as thy
hope and belief.

Cowardly art thou and timid? they rise to pro-
voke thee against them;

Hast thou courage? enough, see them exulting to
yield.

Yea, the rough rock, the dull earth, the wild sea's
furying waters

(Violent, say'st thou, and hard, mighty thou
think'st to destroy),

All with ineffable longing are waiting their In-
vader,

All, with one varying voice, call to him, Come and
subdue;

Still for their Conqueror call, and, but for the joy
of being conquered

(Rapture they will not forgo), dare to resist and
rebel;

Still, when resisting and raging, in soft undervoice
say unto him,

Fear not, retire not, O man; hope evermore and
believe.

* * * * *

Go with the sun and the stars, and yet evermore
in thy spirit

Say to thyself: It is good: yet is there better than it.

This that I see is not all, and this that I do is but little;

Nevertheless it is good, though there is better than it.

Such was Arthur Hugh Clough, pure-souled as spirits around the throne of God, yet smitten to barrenness of purpose by that spirit of universal doubt which is of such palsyng power. But loved he was by those whose love was best worth having; —companionable, lovable as any young Englishman that ever pulled an oar on Isis. Not to the wavering testimony of his poems only must we go if we would know him aright, but to the testimony also of those who loved him well. And the man we thus learn to know is an unique blend of power and failure, of inspiration to others, of faltering speech in himself. "The child-angel," the Tennyson children called him. "Arthur is very kind," we read in the early diary of that sister of his whose name stands so honourably interwoven with the higher education of women; "in truth he is a sweet angel, so gentle and good and so considerate. He is the comfort and joy of my life; it is for him, and from him, that I am incited to seek after all that is lovely and of good report." To him, too early called from this bewildering earth, Matthew Arnold ad-

dressed that perfect threnody "Thyrsis"; and to have called forth that song of lament from one of such fastidious soul is to be proved a spirit rare and beautiful indeed. But Matthew's brother, Thomas, tells us how the mouth and chin hinted "some lack of determination and firmness," and even Matthew, though he writes to his sister that she and Clough are "the two people I in my heart care most to please by what I write," and writes to his mother that "he is one of the few people who ever made a deep impression on me," yet clearly reveals his sense of the haunting weakness of the man. He seems half to rejoice in the hour of his mourning that he who had made that deep impression on him "no longer survives to wear it out himself by becoming ordinary and different from what he was." And he acknowledges that "people were beginning to say about Clough that he never would do anything now, and, in short, to pass him over." Thomas Arnold calls him "the Hamlet of the nineteenth century," and laments that "too much thinking had dulled the edge of his marvellous ability." His "inner being," this old friend adds, "once strongly rooted in the old-world faith and hope, had gone all a-wrack, and could find no answer to the invading, paralysing doubt." Yet he points out that it was in his last illness that he wrote the noble psalm of faith,

Say not the struggle nought availeth;
assures us that he never yielded to that last scepticism,—the doubt of ethical truth,—to which Renan half gave way; and declares that his was a soul “than which none more naturally devout ever existed.”

On the whole, we cannot resist the evidence that those who most admired and loved the noble elements of his character were the most deeply disappointed at the failure of his manhood to fulfil the glorious promise of his youth. And perhaps, after “Thyrsis,” his best epitaph is in the words of his sister: “I believe that in secret, unknown places the foundation-stones of all that is wise and good are still left standing that he has laid; and let us hope that some of his friends, some that knew him and loved him, may yet build up some goodly structures thereon.”

I cannot dismiss as without significance the sense on the part of those who loved him that there was a broken chord in the music of his life; and I believe that his failure to achieve and adequately to impress arose from the haunting doubts that reduced him ever and again to so fatal an intellectual and practical hesitancy. But I understand, too, the clinging love and loyalty which he awakened in so many friends. Palgrave speaks of the “resistless spell” by which he held them. Nor must we forget that that pall of doubt did

not always cast its gloom over his laden spirit. Poems he has of bright and cheery note, bravely facing the world. Of its kind the Bothie of Tober na Vuolich stands unique; and as one drinks in its breezy, wholesome music, breathing the Highland ozone, one marvels that men condemned it as socialistic and immoral. While we sorrow for a gifted soul beclouded by the weary riddle of human life and a will-power paralysed by haunting hesitancy, let us thank God for a poet of pure and beautiful spirit, who through all his waverings never wavered in his love for all things honest, lovely, and of good report.

IV.

ALFRED TENNYSON:

"THE LARGER HOPE."

SINCE I announced this present series of discourses, the splendid Memoir of Alfred Lord Tennyson by his son has been published; and after its perusal I am doubtful of the adequacy of the sub-title which I had affixed to the present lecture. "The Larger Hope:" yes, Tennyson's poetry breathes that Larger Hope indeed, and it was he himself who coined the phrase; but if with Paul we are to draw sharp distinction between Hope and Faith, then Faith, which is greater than Hope, is certainly a mark of Tennyson. For one realises as one reads page after page of the communion of the man with his friends, as one beholds the very processes by which his verse framed itself in his soul, that his are songs of a very real Faith, not merely of a Hope which tremulously thinks, conjectures, or supposes. It is only when we come to compare with his utterances the noble and unfaltering flights of Browning, that we feel that the Faith of the latter was of a yet more stalwart and native type.

One thing, perhaps, which has led us rather to underestimate the intensity of his faith, as revealed to us when we turn from the Poems to the Memoir, is the fact that the Faith in him cannot be defined. It has no sharp and definite outline. It is a vast, deep, strong trust,—but a trust that can be catalogued or codified in no set terms,—simply a trust that the universe rests in Divine Love, that that Love can never fail, that the God Unseen and Undefinable at the back and basis and summit of all things cares and will care for His own; that there is a life for us beyond, beautiful, sacred, the conditions and circumstances of which, however, we can here and now in no way picture or conceive.

So the Faith of Tennyson cannot be distributed in Articles. It cannot be enunciated in Creeds. It can only be breathed in Poetry, or now and again break forth under the stimulus of emotion when friend is closeted with friend in closest communion of the spirit.

Tennyson was sure that all is well; but he was no less sure that we live hemmed in by mystery, that we cannot understand the make of things, that the problems of the universe stretch above, beneath, around, insoluble by man. He was impressed unceasingly with the limitations of his own powers. And so, says the Duke of Argyll, one of his nearest friends, though habi-

tually dealing with the tremendous problems which surround mankind, "his inner spirit seemed to me to be always feeling his own words :

But what am I?
An infant crying in the night:
An infant crying for the light:
And with no language but a cry."

"In speculation," adds the Duke, "he was often bold. In a sense he was sometimes even daring. But . . . he was full of a kind of awful wonder,—of a silent worship. His direct theological utterances were few. But he said enough to show that he clung to the divine truths of the 'creed of creeds.'" Fully alive to, largely sharing, the higher and nobler intellectual scepticism of his age, he yet was of those who for ever feel the presence and the touch, to use his own dim words, of some

Infinite Ideality,
Immeasurable Reality,
Infinite Personality,

in whom the human heart may put its trust for the time that now is and the eternity that is to be.

Not in the flat of the fens, but amid the rolling wolds of a fairer part of Lincolnshire Alfred Tennyson was born, in that year of wonder and of grace which gave birth to the three absolutely greatest

Woods that belt the gray hill-side,
The seven elms, the poplars four
That stand beside my father's door,
 the brook that loves
To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand,
Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves.

We catch pictures of Alfred from time to time.

Some ten years later comes to Somersby the news that that wayward, brilliant, mighty singer whose romance glitters on the threshold of this century has perished in that Greek land he loved so well. The boy Tennyson had yielded himself captive to the charm and power of the wild, sweet

Byronic verse, and it seemed to him that all the worth of the world and life was gone, and we see him pacing alone through the wood in the gloom and cutting deep, in the sandstone cliff, the words to him so eloquent of irreparable loss, "Byron is dead."

And then we meet him far away from the placid slopes of his rustic home. The quaint dialect of "the Northern Farmer" no longer strikes on his ear when he walks abroad, but all the life and thought and jest of Cambridge are about him; and many friendships are formed, and among them all shines out that pure and perfect one which, when had befallen afresh "the passing of Arthur," was to make the foundation of his matchless elegiac.

Four years that pregnant friendship endured, strengthening with every month, and then came the tidings that in distant Vienna, Arthur Hallam, the bright, the noble, wise and pure, had closed his eyes in death.

That was the turning-point in the life of Alfred Tennyson. The Memoir brings out with impressive clearness how that immense bereavement wrought on the poet's soul. It was to him the baptism of fire. For seventeen years his spirit dwelt upon the sorrow, the mystery, the seeming broken promise of that brilliant life cut

short. In varying mood and with varying thought, now groping in the darkness, now triumphant in the blaze of light, he wrote number after number of that vast and splendid threnody, till after seventeen years they shaped themselves out into their full and majestic hymnody, and he prefaced the whole with the stately stanzas which dedicate this monument of an ideal friendship to the

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,

Forgive my grief for one removed,
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
I trust he lives in Thee, and there
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
Confusions of a wasted youth;
Forgive them where they fail in truth,
And in Thy wisdom make me wise.

And then, I think, one of the most interesting pictures is the meeting of Wordsworth and Tennyson in London, the former already well past his three-score years and ten, the latter forty years his junior, the two English poets, Laureates both by higher ordination than any royal appointment, who exactly divide this nineteenth century between them, the one in his calm and spiritual verse reading with placid certainty the God whom nature clearly mirrors, the other finding the mirror blurred, and out of the depths of an agonised spirit

only turning at last his "wild and wandering cries" to the harmonies of a noble faith. Their mutual greatness just overlapped at the middle cleavage of the century. Wordsworth died on Shakespeare's birthday in 1850. Tennyson laid the last stone to the finished structure of "In Memoriam" in 1849.

And the years rolled by, and all the vast series of Tennyson's creations, star after star, rose and shone upon the world, chiefest of all in length, in ambition, in complexity of parts, that galaxy of idylls in which the poet speaks out of the heart of the old legendary lore of Britain for purity of thought and desire, of deed and life, setting before all men the Holy Grail as the goal of their search, which is given to none but the pure in heart to see.

How does the grim Carlyle paint the man in those days? *He* does not flatter.

"One of the finest men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusky-dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free, and easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical metallic—fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between."

And as the poet rose in fame he rose in

honour too wherever men love genius nobly used. And he gave the courtly laurels, worn in days that are past by the mere sycophant and courtier, a more reverend meaning, which we had vainly hoped they always would retain, speaking out the great human sympathies before which fade away the pomp and tinsel of a court, and all mankind is one, as when to the widowed Queen he spoke his benediction :—

May all love,
His love, unseen but felt, o'ershadow thee,
The love of all thy sons encompass thee,
The love of all thy daughters cherish thee,
The love of all thy people comfort thee,
Till God's love set thee at his side again.

And then in the zenith of his fame came the mandate by which he took his place among the peers of the realm. It is index to the place he had in the reverence of Englishmen that a promotion intended to mark the honour in which he was held by the rulers of the land struck almost all of us at the first shock as though it belittled his greatness as man and poet. Yet the Memoir clearly shows the loftiness of motive with which he accepted honours which he would fain have shunned.

But it is in the Poet, not the Peer, that his countrymen will ever take a loving pride. His presence in the gilded chamber contrasted vividly indeed with that of the

average lordling. A mighty dome of forehead towered over the deep dark eyes. Long rough locks flowed around the sculptured head. The stalwart figure rose above the normal stature of a man. And the environment was more congenial when, with loose cloak fluttering about his limbs, and rough hat slouched upon his brow, he strode across the southern Downs, than when he sat on the cross benches in the House of Lords.

What then has been the message of this poet to the folk of his time and nation in the highest things that move the minds of men?

If Tennyson re-wrought Hope and Faith for England and the nineteenth century, it was not that he had not sounded the deepest depths of modern Doubt. Nay, it was his very mastery of Lucretian and Darwinian philosophies that distinguished his Faith from the common and mediocre orthodoxies of his day.

No intellectual suggestion was too deadly a heresy for him to measure its depth and breadth and co-ordinate it with the knowledge of his time. He entered into the soul of Latin Lucretius, and sang that old philosophy which swept the Pagan gods from out their temples and built up the universe of atoms driving myriad-fold across the void. He entered into the soul of the materialist of to-day, and put into

weird verse the thought of human life rising out of the dark, eternal deep,

Whirl'd for a million æons through the vast
Waste dawn of multitudinous eddying light,

to be stranded for a little while in human consciousness, moving down "fated channels," and then swept out again

To that last deep where we and thou are still.

Again and again in the stanzas of "In Memoriam" uprises the all-questioning doubt, which asks if there be indeed a God or any hope for men of Eternal life. Of all that scepticism Tennyson sounded the depths.

But men may meet these vast and haunting doubts in any of three separate fashions. They may flee from them in affright, and with blind eyes cling still to the ancient creed, though there be no soul-conviction in them of the creed they utter. Or they may straightway yield to the assault of doubt and fling away the faith. Or they may confront the doubt, and measure it and try it, confront the old faith too, and measure it and try it; and beat out new faith for the days that lie before them, all purified and etherealised by the questionings which they have dared to face. And Tennyson, like the friend whom he had loved, had the manhood in

him to meet his doubt after this grander fashion. He had

The faith, the vigour bold, to dwell
On doubts that drive the coward back.

And in that pondering he did well. It
was the training of the soul.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them : thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own ;
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone.

Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out ;
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

Yes, in doubt, honest, honourable, strenuous. Be it remembered always that not of the careless, easy doubt which has not been faced and fought, but only of that doubt which remains alongside of the purer faith, when men have wrestled sternly through many a day and night, sings our poet those oft-misquoted and distorted words.

And along with this unflinching sincerity of thought grew up a scathing scorn of mere professional religion and of all such dogma as seemed to him narrow or hard or cruel. How it throbs, that

scorn, in the words of the dying widow in the terrible poem of Rizpah, remonstrating against the well-meaning consolatory platitudes poured into her ear by her visitor :

Election, Election and Reprobation—it's all very well;
But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him in Hell.
For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord has look'd into my care,
And He means me, I'm sure, to be happy with Willy, I know not where.
And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul, that is all you desire :
Do you think that I care for *my* soul if my boy be gone to the fire ?
I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you may leave me alone—
You never have borne a child—you are just as hard as a stone.

Yes, he was ever a brave Doubter, this Laureate poet of England. He dared to look into the depths of the mystery and to say, "This thing is false and a lie, though millions profess it; that thing is afar off and beyond the understanding of man." But all the time, while his understanding refused to be bondsman to any man, the great soul in him felt after the things which a man may trust, though he cannot understand.

And so when that seventeen years' threnody was nearly finished, he tells us how he could not find God by outward

searching, but yet within the heart he
felt and knew Him none the less :

I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye ;
Nor through the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun :

If e'er, when faith had fall'n asleep,
I heard a voice, " Believe no more,"
And heard an ever-breaking shore,
That tumbled in the Godless deep :

A warmth within the breast would melt :
The freezing reason's colder part,
And, like a man in wrath, the heart
Stood up, and answered, "*I have FELT.*"

No, like a child in doubt and fear :
But that blind clamour made me wise ;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near.

Clearer and clearer through those seven-
teen years came to the inner spirit of the
poet the light by which, in spite of every
intellectual doubt, in spite of the many
things he could not understand, he was
sure that God was there and that "strong
Son of God, Immortal Love."

And now in the meridian of his splendid
powers, all disciplined of soul, the poet-
prophet looked out upon the world,
and he who once had found Him not
"in world or sun or insect's wing or
eagle's eye," thrilled to his presence in

all the panoply of stars and every flower
that blows :

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills
and the plains—
Are not these, O Soul, the vision of Him who
reigns ?
Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and spirit with
Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands
and feet.
God is Law, say the wise; O Soul, and let us
rejoice,
For if He thunder by Law, the thunder is yet His
Voice.
Law is God, say some: no God at all, says the fool;
For all we have power to see is a straight staff
bent in a pool;
And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of
man cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision, were it
not He ?

The whole vast mystery of God is woven
into every wayside blossom. There is a
whole philosophy in those famous half-
dozen lines :

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies ;
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

And this all-ruling, all-permeating God,
what can we tell of His purposes in the
onward sweep of the infinite creation ?

Only this, that somehow, somewhere,

somewhen, "that God which ever lives
and loves," will achieve the

One far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

With all the mystery and the darkness
still is the poet able to sing,

Oh, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood ;

That nothing walks with aimless feet ;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete ;

That not a worm is cloven in vain ;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivel'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything ;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

Not knowledge this, the poet tells us ;
but only trust. For he recurs again many
times to the theme "we cannot know."
But by that he seems to mean only that
we cannot understand. And as the years
go by, he seems ever to strengthen and
deepen in the trust which is fuller of
assurance, richer with inspiration, than
any purely scientific knowledge. "So

runs my dream," he sings; yes, but a dream which, more and more as he draws towards the Bar, he feels to reflect the supreme reality of fact divine. He has lived his four-score years when he sings the song of the "Crossing of the Bar," and of that Pilot who, as he told his son, is "that Divine and Unseen, Who is always guiding us."

And again as the years wear on, like every thinker who has truly come in touch with God, Tennyson, realises more and more that for us men the supreme, sublimest wonder is not in "the process of the suns," or in the divine energies shrined in tree or flower, but in the mystery of the human Will, endowed with the miracle of free partnership with God. Not matter is the foremost marvel,

But this main-miracle, that thou art thou.
With power on thine own act and on the world.

And so from his dreams and visions of things which seers and poets see, arises that awful sense of human responsibility which is the patent of man's nobility.

O well for him whose will is strong !
He suffers, but he will not suffer long ;
He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong :
For him nor moves the loud world's random mock,
Nor all Calamity's hughest waves confound,
Who seems a promontory of rock,
That compass'd round with turbulent sound,

In middle ocean meets the surging shock,
Tempest-buffed, citadel-crown'd.—
But *ill* for him who, bettering not with time,
Corrupts the strength of heaven-descended Will,
And ever weaker grows, thro' acted crime,
Or seeming-genial, venial fault,
Recurring and suggesting still!
He seems as one whose footsteps halt,
Toiling in immeasurable sand.

And this human Will, capable of such
glorious strength, yet liable, too, to such
miserable, degrading feebleness, must
seek to be penetrated and made mighty
by the Will that endures for ever:—

O living Will, that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow through our deeds and make them pure.

Long had been the strife in the poet's
mind through those seventeen years, ere
clear and luminous into his soul sank the
assurance that the soul of his friend could
never die. A flickering light that faith
for long, now shining out upon the waters,
now quenched again in storms of doubt.
But sweet and strong at last, like Christ-
mas bells, rings out the faith which even
in the early months of his bereavement
had not been unheard as it flitted across
his heart:—

Our voices took a higher range;
Once more we sang: "They do not die,

Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
Nor change to us, although they change;
Rapt from the fickle and the frail,
With gathered power, yet the same,
Pierces the keen seraphic flame
From orb to orb, from veil to veil."

No man may sum up the teaching of Tennyson to these nineteenth century generations and not tell of his long plea for the purity of manhood. That is the whole motive of the whole procession of the Arthurian Idylls. "Arthur" stands for that law of utmost purity by which alone men reach their noblest selves. And each knight at that round table is set to seek the Holy Grail. This Holy Grail is nothing else than that spiritual vision which comes to men who fight the battle of life pure in the inward parts, and comes to none others whatsoever. And the knights who are called to make that quest are some, like Gawain, careless and profligate wholly, and make no quest at all; some, like Launcelot, in intention pure, made for noble things, yet caught by the temptations of the flesh disguised as high and divine desires; and Sir Galahad is pure in every act and thought, and for him is the vision in all its strange and marvellous beauty. And with all the noble qualities of Launcelot, even because there was in him a nobility so high, therefore from his fall come

disaster and ruin and red war, the breaking up of the sacred kingdom and enduring sorrow for the land. So the sin against the law of purity wreaks its dreadful stain, not on the sinner only, but on the lives of men and women all around, bringing darkness on the earth, and veiling the face of God.

For long years Tennyson shrank from the theme of the Holy Grail. It was pressed upon him by friends who knew his genius and his sacred passion. Yet he feared lest to weave that quest into his verse should seem to some irreverent. But at last he set himself to that august and prophetic task. And never did preacher of holy things seek more earnestly for consecration than Tennyson ere he wrote the story of the seeking of the Grail. And by the force of his whole manhood all set towards making utterance worthy of his theme, it was given him of God, in spite of Matthew Arnold's depreciation, to touch the conscience of England to the core, and to awaken in our land a new strain of aspiration and of reverence.

How much that is worthy of our deepest study, our loftiest admiration, must we pass by! I think we shall do well to pass to that last thin volume of poems of which the octogenarian poet revised the proofs when already the shadow of death—or for him shall

we not say "the light of death"?—was on him, and to the poems that stand towards the end thereof,—“Doubt and Prayer,” “Faith,” “The Silent Voices,” “God and the Universe.” These are his final gift to us all. “This book,” says his son, secretary, confidant, and biographer, “he felt was his last will and testament to the world, and throughout there are echoes of the different notes he had struck before, and a summing-up of the faith in which he had walked.” With reverence then, as in the presence of the dead,—the dead whose death is the passage to more glorious life,—let us often read those four brief utterances which I have named.

And to these let us add the wonderful lines on the Making of Man, in which Darwinian Evolution is made to minister to faith in the ultimate perfection of our race.

Where is one that, born of woman, altogether can
escape
From the lower world within him, moods of tiger,
or of ape?

Man as yet is *being made*, and ere the crowning
Age of ages,
Shall not æon after æon pass and touch him into
shape?

All about him shadow still, but, while the races
flower and fade,
Prophet eyes may catch a glory slowly gaining on
the shade,

Till the peoples all are one, and all their voices
blend in choric
Hallelujah to the Maker: "It is finish'd. *Man is
MADE.*"

Such is some faint outline of the poetry of Alfred Tennyson. I have not dwelt on his exquisite music, nor yet on the stately purity of his loftiest style. Rather I have quoted from those musically ruder fragments in which sound is made to minister to the expression of rugged or fiery thought. But pure was Tennyson in mind and heart as the stately measure of Guinevere or the Passing of Arthur. And, like all the greatest, modest. "I am delighted to know you," was the greeting to him of a famous statesman on first introduction. "You won't find much in me—after all," was the simple and sincere reply. But other men in whom was "much," did find much in him. "The foremost man in my eyes of all his generation," he "realised to me, more than any one else whom I have ever known, the 'heroic' idea," said the Earl of Selborne. "A magnificent man, who stood before you in his native refinement and strength," said Jowett. "I left him," said Palgrave, "with a dim perception that the man was even greater than his work." There was in him, beyond all other elements of attractiveness or power, that commanding charm and impressiveness which belongs to a

man who feels himself ever in the immediate presence of God. Said he to his niece: "I should be sorely afraid to live my life without God's presence; but to feel that He is by my side now just as much as you are, that is the very joy of my heart." And looking up into that bronzed and thought-lined face, she saw that the glory of God was upon it, and that the presence of the Most High indeed overshadowed him.

And so, farewell to our poet,—yes, in a very special sense, surely, the poet of ordinary Englishmen, whatever his ultimate place in the Temple of Fame; more sane and self-controlled than Shelley, nearer to us and more in the world of men than Wordsworth, full conqueror of the more paralysing doubts that never ceased to enfeeble Clough, voicing all the thought, the feeling, and the hope that are noblest in the Victorian age, mighty wielder of the hammer of language, he stands serene on the threshold of the immortal life, and we see the light of God across his brow.

And from such a poet it is not only larger and more generous creeds that we have to learn. He stands before us in his purity and strength, an exemplar of practical life, an inspirer of ethical aspiration, a leader on the path of manly faithfulness. He is one of those to whom it is given to fill us with a longing to be like him.

To strike to new harmonies the chords which vibrate still from the strong touch of Shakspeare and of Milton and of Wordsworth is not, indeed, for us. But we can be faithful to the best we know. The sublimest thing in Tennyson is not the harmonic ring of his exalted verse. It is the life-long loyalty to truth and the grandeur of faith that slowly grew therefrom. And so the ethical lesson which he leaves to us all seems to me just this:—

Never consent to the suggestion that that is true which the better man within you pronounces false. Never assent to the creed of the orthodox or the sceptic unless to your inward man it seems a verity. When Aubrey de Vere urged him to add a "Paradiso" to "In Memoriam," he answered, "I have written what I have felt and known; and I will never write anything else." Never shelter yourself from doubt under the cloak of other men's creeds. Never consent to deny what you once revered as true, while the better man within you in the depth of your conscience holds it true still. Take for God's truth that which harmonises with all the best you know and helps and strengthens you in nobility of life. Live purely, faithfully, humbly, patiently, bravely; and all doubts will solve themselves at last at the roots of

your soul in that creed embracing all the
churches and the nations and the worlds,
which confesses

That God which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off, divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

V.

MATTHEW ARNOLD:

"THE ETERNAL NOTE OF SADNESS."

"MY poems represent, on the whole, the main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century, and thus they will probably have their day as people become conscious to themselves of what that movement of mind is, and interested in the literary productions which reflect it. It might be fairly urged that I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson, and less intellectual vigour and abundance than Browning; yet, because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn, as they have had theirs." So wrote Matthew Arnold to his mother in 1869.

"The main movement of mind of the last quarter of a century"—that is, from 1844, the year in which he took his "Final" at Oxford, to 1869, when he was in the forty-seventh year of his age—a period which began with the passage of John Henry Newman from the Anglican to the

Roman Church, and included, among other events of far-reaching theological influence, the publication of "Essays and Reviews," of Colenso's *Essays on the Pentateuch*, of Renan's *Vie de Jésus*, and of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. In other words, it was a period of immense intellectual disintegration. Old and time-worn theories were dissolved. New questionings arose touching the very basis of faith and the fundamental philosophy of life. No ancient opinion was safe from challenge. New knowledge and new ideas, pregnant with far-reaching issues, arose in the minds of men. Discussions, which now already have lost their first edge, startled, alarmed, or delighted men by their keenness and vivacity. And no man could foresee whether the nineteenth Christian century was to end in a general destruction of all religious belief or in the dawn of a new and purer faith than the Church had ever known.

With the problems thus suddenly thrown upon the world Matthew Arnold directly dealt after his own trenchant fashion in those several prose essays which, though Tennyson bade him write no more of "those prose things," but give the world more poems, are yet among the possessions of English literature to be permanently treasured. True poet, he dealt with none of them directly and dialectically in his

verse; but, as he himself told his mother, they are all reflected in his poetry, and the reflections are coloured by a mind singularly pure in sentiment and rich in poetic faculty. Our present task is to try to distil from his poetry the meanings which it has for ethical and religious thought.

As we shall recognise in the next lecture how much, with all their differences, Browning was akin to Tennyson, so we note here and now how much Matthew Arnold was akin to Arthur Clough,—one of the very few men—so he declares in a letter written immediately after the death of Clough—who had ever deeply impressed him. What the companionship of these two men was, those well know who have read “Thyrsis,” and have understood it. Both had been moulded in youth—Matthew, of course, in a still higher degree than Clough—by Thomas Arnold. Both carried with them to Oxford the best and noblest Rugby traditions. But Clough went up to Oxford when the mastery of Newman over the University still was waxing, Matthew Arnold when it was already on the wane; and Arnold accordingly thought himself into his characteristic positions in a calmer atmosphere than Clough. Arnold, like Clough, had a highly-developed tendency to doubt and question, but he had also in him that sterner stuff which has made the Arnolds

on the whole the most remarkable English family of the nineteenth century. And so, while he himself, with all his affection and reverence for Clough, deplores his friend's indecision, he never lacked decisiveness, and no man can charge it against Arnold that what he has written has been wanting in effect. His prose has been, in fact, comparable as an intellectual force to the forces I have already named, in permanence surpasses all of them save the Darwinian teachings; and his poetry reflects, so far as true poetry may, the teaching of his prose.

So that for all the sadness, the fastidiousness, and the scepticism which breathe through Arnold's verse, there is in it a virility which I for my part am unable to discover in that of Clough. He is never paralysed by his doubts even when they go to the very abyss of things. He is never in any doubt about his doubt; and he is always certain of his certainties. His arrow never wavers as it cleaves towards the mark. And even when his song is saddest, his sentiment most delicate and subtle, we always feel that this is a strong and masculine soul with whom we have communed. These are great qualities; and when we add to them his much finer poetic gifts, they abundantly account for the fact that his verse has taken a permanent place in English literature,

while that of Clough is almost entirely neglected.

I have taken from "Dover Beach" the sub-title of this address: "The Eternal Note of Sadness"; and it is from that note, I think, that we must set out in estimating the bearing of his poetry. He was haunted ever by that undertone in human life which to the reflective temperament is so apt to throb with perpetual melancholy. Down in the depths of our life, underneath all our activities, our interests, even our affections and our happiness, he was conscious of an unceasing craving, a longing that can never be satisfied, to know and understand what life is, and what the fate of man, a sense too that we are in the grasp of a power immeasurable and relentless, against which it is vain to struggle; conscious too that this fruitless yearning is not in the individual breast alone, but is the deepest element in the life of our race, colouring all its story through all the centuries through which it dwells upon the earth.

His fullest utterance of this deep thought came to him as he gazed out from the Kentish seaport upon the moon-lit waters of the Straits. And the grating of the receding waves upon the shingle seemed to him the very echo of his thought:—

The sea is calm to-night. *Dover Beach*
The tide is full, the moon lies fair

Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the *Ægean*, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and
flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

But to our generation with peculiar

keenness comes this mood of a nameless melancholy. And why? For the very reason that "the Sea of Faith" is no longer "at the full." With Clough, Arnold felt how the old faith was gone for ever, and no new faith arisen. And so, at another time, he finds himself a pilgrim to that world-famed Carthusian monastery high among the hills of Switzerland,

Where, ghost-like in the deepening night,
Cowl'd forms brush by in gleaming white;

and it seems to him as though they who had trained him in the faith which his father held upbraided him for seeking refuge amid these survivals of the mediæval creed, asking him,

What dost thou in this living tomb?

But as some ancient Greek, whose own Zeus, and Apollo, and Athene, and sea-born Aphrodite were long since dead, might stand to-day in sympathetic awe before some temple of Scandinavian Thor or Odin, and weep because "both were faiths, and both are gone," so, he answers, it is with him. That glowing faith of his own ardent youth he can now hold fast no more than the hoary superstitions of these Carthusian monks.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born,
With nowhere yet to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.

X

Their faith, my tears, the world deride—
I come to shed them at their side.

And then with impetuous appeal he
turns to the monastery with its gloomy
walls, and dark, dank cells:—

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,
Ye solemn seats of holy pain!
Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me round,
Till I possess my soul again;
Till free my thoughts before me roll,
Not chafed by hourly false control!

But while ever and again this note
of unutterable sadness wails through
Matthew Arnold's verse, he will not be
unmanned by it. He is no whining
poetaster. / If the world be sad, he will
be no slave to melancholy. Even if the
sorrow of life overwhelms thoughtful men to-
day, and the gaiety of the thoughtless
has no foundation, yet it may not be
always so. It is as when a traveller
voyages down a mighty river. The
generations of old were near its spring.
Its waters sparkled, and its banks were
green and wooded. Such was human life
when men still believed in the faiths of
man's infancy and youth. Now the river
flows between flatter shores; and the air
is dark with the smoke of dismal cities,
and the traveller is depressed, having no
beauty whereon to rest his eye. But it
well may be that by-and-by he shall pass
these black and vulgar scenes, which have

for the spirit no inspiration and no joy ; that future generations shall sail down broader reaches of the river, the banks indeed far receding, the old beauties all long passed by, but whiffs of the great sea beyond already blowing up the channel and filling the heart of man with a new courage and a new hope, as he nears those wide waters which the keel of the vessel of life never yet has ploughed.

Yes, let not hope desert the breast. There is that in life, however sad it be, which has indeed a promise. Lift up your eyes and see. Let us wander with Arnold on those lonely mountains where it seems to him that the spirit of Obermann, the mystic recluse who once haunted their snows and crags, comes to him with counsel. He would fain, like Obermann, avoid the human crowd and nurse his melancholy amid the solitary hills. But the spirit of the sage comes to him with a nobler lore. Even as on the ancient world, in its gloom of unbelief, broke the sunshine of the word of Jesus Christ, and gladdened the earth anew, even so now, though the old faith be dead, the east already reddens with the dawn of a happier day. The spirit of Obermann seems to him to say :—

“Despair not thou as I despair’d,
Nor be cold gloom thy prison !

Forward the gracious hours have fared,
And see! the sun is risen!

"He breaks the winter of the past;
A green, new earth appears.
Millions, whose life in ice lay fast,
Have thoughts, and smiles, and tears.

"What though there still need effort, strife?
Though much be still unwon?
Yet warm it mounts, the hour of life!
Death's frozen hour is done!

"The world's great order dawns in sheen,
After long darkness rude,
Divinelier imaged, clearer seen,
With happier zeal pursued.

* * * *

"Help it to fill that deep desire,
The want which rack'd our brain,
Consumed our heart with thirst like fire,
Immedicable pain;

"Which to the wilderness drove out
Our life, to Alpine snow,
And palsied all our word with doubt,
And all our work with woe—

"What still of strength is left, employ
That end to help attain:
*One common wave of thought and joy
Lifting mankind again!"*

And then as the voice of the ghostly
seer was hushed, the poet looked up:

And glorious there, without a sound,
Across the glimmering lake,
High in the Valais-depth profound,
I saw the morning break.

And thus from time to time there rises

in the poet's soul a hope which, though it cannot hush the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar" of the underlying sadness, yet mingles with a certain chastened and sober joy, till, as it seems to me, in his very sadness there comes to be a certain gladness too.

And though we wear out life, alas !
Distracted as a homeless wind,
In beating where we must not pass,
In seeking what we shall not find ;

Yet we shall one day gain, life past,
Clear prospect o'er our being's whole ;
Shall see ourselves, and learn at last
Our true affinities of soul.

* * * *

Then, in the Eternal Father's smile,
Our soothed, encouraged souls will dare
To seem as free from pride and guile,
As good, as generous, as they are.

Then we shall know our friends!—though much
Will have been lost—the help in strife,
The thousand sweet, still joys of such
As hand in hand face earthly life—

Though these be lost, there will be yet
A sympathy august and pure ;
Ennobled by a vast regret,
And by contrition seal'd thrice sure.

And we, whose ways were unlike here,
May then more neighbouring courses ply ;
May to each other be brought near,
And greet across infinity.

It seems to me that Matthew Arnold's prevailing spiritual mood is best indicated

by a simple paradox, that *glad sadness* best describes his feeling—a sadness quietly, cheerfully, sometimes even gaily borne, as of one who is content that it shall be so, and will live his life as becomes a man, however much of it be set to a minor key.

And so his most ardent prayer is to be saved from the enfeebling and corroding influence that lurks in perpetual doubt—to be saved from weak passion, and from vague and vain regret.

Thou, who dost dwell alone—
Thou, who dost know Thine own—
Thou, to whom all are known
From the cradle to the grave—
Save, oh! save.

* * * *

From the ingrain'd fashion
Of this earthly nature
That mars thy creature;
From grief that is but passion,
From mirth that is but feigning,
From tears that bring no healing,
From wild and weak complaining,
Thine old strength revealing,
Save, oh! save.

From doubt, where all is double;
Where wise men are not strong,
Where comfort turns to trouble,
Where just men suffer wrong;
Where sorrow treads on joy,
Where sweet things soonest cloy,
Where faiths are built on dust,
Where love is half mistrust,
Hungry, and barren, and sharp as the sea—
Oh! set us free.

O let the false dream fly,
 Where our sick souls do lie
 Tossing continually!
 O where Thy voice doth come
 Let all doubts be dumb,
 Let all words be mild,
 All strifes be reconciled,
 All pains beguiled!
 Light bring no blindness,
 Love no unkindness,
 Knowledge no ruin,
 Fear no undoing!
 From the cradle to the grave,
 Save, oh! save.

And Matthew Arnold, with all his sadness, feels that there is a dignity possible to the life of man, which none who has braced his mind with strength and aspiration, would willingly exchange for mere light-heartedness. The man who ignores the solemn issues of life, or drowns the sense of them either in an artificial faith or in frivolity, is no better than a madman. The man who permits himself by them to be paralysed, oppressed, or crushed is no better than a slave. Is there no choice for us but these two contrasted tempers? Hear the answer which Matthew Arnold gives:

Is there no life, but these alone?
 Madman or slave, must man be one?

* * * *

Ye heavens, whose pure dark regions have no sign
 Of languor, though so calm, and, though so great,
 Are yet untroubled and unpassionate;
 Who, though so noble, share in the world's toil,

And, though so task'd, keep free from dust and
soil!

I will not say that your mild deeps retain
A tinge, it may be, of *their* silent pain
Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd in vain—
But I will rather say that you remain
A world above man's head, to let him see
How boundless might his soul's horizons be,
How vast, yet of what clear transparency!
How it were good to abide there, and breathe free;
How fair a lot to fill
Is left to each man still!

To enter into this soul of things which
the calm, majestic heavens mirror, and
there abide and quietly do one's task, that
is to live indeed. And musing in a glade
of that large, fair, elm-lined garden in the
heart of the roar of Western London, at
Kensington, Arnold prays that he may live
that life.

Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.

Yes, and the dignity and worth of this
life which lies open even to him whose
critical temperament is unable to receive
the more vivid impressions of religious
faith lie in the fact that to him also the
way of *consecrated duty* lies ever open.

His flashes of insight may be few and rare. Not for him, as for men living when the tide of faith is at the full, does the daily path of duty shine always with the realised light of God. But the gleams that come and go give him light enough for the brave groping of his way on the destined road. And the sceptic poet can coin verse as noble and enheartening as that of any Christian hymn.

4 5 8

We cannot kindle when we will
The fire which in the heart resides ;
The Spirit bloweth and is still,
In mystery our soul abides.
But tasks in hours of insight will'd
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.

With aching hands and bleeding feet
We dig and heap, lay stone on stone ;
We bear the burden and the heat
Of the long day, and wish 'twere done.
Not till the hours of light return,
All we have built do we discern.

Surely this is very noble preaching from one in whose soul the Christian hope and faith burn so dim. Yet the shadow is never long lifted from his spirit, and as age advances, the eager anticipations and enthusiasms of his youth wane and fade. There come to him the tidings of the death of Clough ; and he wanders once again in the neighbourhood surrounding Oxford, where so often he had tramped with him, his friend. And even as the

hills seem steeper to him now and the distances much longer than they seemed in the heyday of that bright comradeship, so the mountain-tops of truth seem less accessible and the way of life seems wearier. And to Thyrsis, the Virgilian name of ideal friendship which he gives to the dead Arthur to whom *his* "In Memoriam" song is dedicated, he sings with melancholy cadence:—

Yes, thou art gone! ^{Thyrsis} and round me too the night — 13

In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.

I see her veil draw soft across the day,

I feel her slowly chilling breath invade

The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with
grey;

I feel her finger light

Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;—

The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,

The heart less bounding at emotion new,

And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short

To the less practised eye of sanguine youth;

And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,

The mountain - tops where is the throne of
Truth,

Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare!

Unbreachable the fort

Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall;

And strange and vain the earthly turmoil
grows,

And near and real the charm of thy repose,

And night as welcome as a friend would fall.

Thus, if Arnold cannot with honesty of soul profess even to himself any defined

and certain faith, yet well is he assured that all faith, which is faith at all, is better than the no faith which is his. All faiths have brought to jaded souls rebirth; and it is his martyrdom that he has no faith potent to help him in his striving for that new life.

Children of men ! the unseen Power, whose eye
For ever doth accompany mankind,
Hath look'd on no religion scornfully
That men did ever find.

Which has not taught weak wills how much they
can ?
Which has not fall'n on the dry heart like rain ?
Which has not cried to sunk, self-weary man :
Thou must be born again !

Children of men ! not that your age excel
In pride of life the ages of your sires,
But that ye think clear, feel deep, bear fruit well,
The Friend of man desires.

There be those, however, who comfort themselves with a certain vain assurance. If the new birth comes not here in this world to the soul, if it give up the strife here baffled and beaten by the world, yet will not that soul be rescued in the life to come from all that now oppresses it and be enfranchised there with nobler powers and fuller joy ? But for such comfort Arnold has nothing but rebuke. If there be such life hereafter, then, well he knows, that it can only take its worth from brave and generous struggle here ; not there, at any

rate, so he deems, can the first start in energy be made by souls which here have played a coward's part.

Foiled by our fellow-men, depress'd, outworn,
We leave the brutal world to take its way,
And, *Patience! in another life, we say,*
The world shall be thrust down, and we up-borne.

And will not, then, the immortal armies scorn
The world's poor, routed leavings? or will they,
Who fail'd under the heat of this life's day,
Support the fervours of the heavenly morn?

No, no! the energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not *begun*;
And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,

From strength to strength advancing—only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.

But if there be *no* immortal life, if the word of Christ be but one more human superstition, then surely here we may eat and drink and make merry since to-morrow we die. To which Arnold makes this heroic answer:—

Long fed on boundless hopes, O race of man,
How angrily thou spurn'st all simpler fare!
"Christ," some one says, "was human, as we are;
No judge eyes us from Heaven, our sin to scan;

We live no more, when we have done our span."—
"Well, then, for Christ," thou answerest, "who can care?

From sin, which Heaven records not, why
forbear?
Live we like brutes our life without a plan!"

So answerest thou ; but why not rather say :
"Hath man no second life ? *Pitch this one high !*
Sits there no judge in Heaven, our sin to see ?—

More strictly, then, the inward judge obey !
Was Christ a man like us ? Ah ! let us try
If we then, too, can be such men as he !"

No poet ever sang whose heart was more
at one than Arnold's with Jesus in this,—
that not he who seeks his life shall save
it, but, if any, he who willingly gives his
life for others. And he seems to hear the
word of the Lord to His messengers bid-
ding them all look on the trouble on earth,
and go carry His peace, the message of
healing and grace, to bewildered and
suffering man.

Gladly they rise at his call,
Gladly obey his command,
Gladly descend to the plain.
—Ah ! How few of them all,
Those willing servants, shall stand
In the Master's presence again !

Yes, that is the sorrow. The message
so precious, the messengers, all save the
fewest, so weak and so powerless !

Some in the tumult are lost ;
Baffled, bewilder'd, they stray.
Some, as prisoners, draw breath.
Some, unconquer'd, are cross'd
(Not yet half through the day)
By a pitiless arrow of death.

Hardly, hardly shall *one*
Come, with countenance bright,
At the close of day, from the plain ;

His Master's errand well done,
Safe through the smoke of the fight,
Back to His Master again.

And yet there was one blessed memory in Matthew Arnold's heart which lifted him many times out of that blank despair, and braced him once again to the life of self-abnegating service. He compared the course of the world to a company of men traversing an Alpine height. And avalanche or cataract or tempest wrecked many a traveller. And only as stragglers, one by one, their comrades abandoned and lost, do some few at last reach their bourne. And when challenged, "Where are your friends?" they answer, "We bring only ourselves! we lost sight of the rest in the storm." But there flows over him the memory of his father; and in a passion of gratitude and reverence and love, he finishes the most beautiful of all his poems:—

Ruining Chapel - 124
But *thou* wouldst not *alone*
Be saved, my father! *alone*
Conquer and come to thy goal,
Leaving the rest in the wild.
We were weary, and *we*
Fearful, and we in our march
Fain to drop down and to die.
Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the trembler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand.
If, in the paths of the world,
Stones might have wounded *thy* feet,
Toil or dejection have tried

Thy spirit, of that we saw
Nothing—to us thou wast still
Cheerful, and helpful, and firm!
Therefore to thee it was given
Many to save with thyself;
And, at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd! to come,
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.

And *through thee* I believe
In the noble and great who are gone;
Pure souls honour'd and blest
By former ages, who else—
Such, so soulless, so poor,
Is the race of men whom I see—
Seem'd but a dream of the heart,
Seem'd but a cry of desire.
Yes! I believe that there lived
Others like thee in the past,
Not like the men of the crowd
Who all round me to-day
Bluster or cringe, and make life
Hideous, and arid, and vile;
But souls temper'd with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good,
Helpers and friends of mankind.

* * * * *
Then, in such hour of need ——— 188
Of your fainting, dispirited race,
Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardour divine!
Beacons of hope, ye appear!
Languor is not in your heart,
Weakness is not in your word,
Weariness not on your brow.
Ye alight in our van! at your voice,
Panic, despair, flee away.
Ye move through the ranks, recall
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
Praise, re-inspire the brave!
Order, courage, return.

Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
Follow your steps as ye go.
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
Strengthen the wavering line,
Stablish, continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God.

I have not dwelt on what seem to me the defects of Matthew Arnold, save on that one "eternal note of sadness," which suffuses all his poesy with so moving a pathos. I have often resented much of the biassed satire of his prose. His criticism of other men seems to me often supercilious and unjust. He never rightly appreciated the best spirit of Nonconformity, permitting scorn to warp his judgment. But fresh from the study of his Poems and the perusal of his Letters to his mother, his wife, his sisters, his friends, I feel that those things are but small, and I am impressed more than I can say with the sweet nobility of the man. The great shadow lay over him,—the great shadow of God eclipsed and heaven hidden. The ache was ever at his heart. And yet in his private circle he poured himself out in one long ministry of pure affection, and we seem to be reading the story of one by nature cheerful, buoyant, gay, irradiating gladness and love around him. And when we turn to his verse, we never can read long but we come to some strenuous call to duty, some bugle-note summoning to cour-

age, to manliness, to steadfast, quiet, self-forgetful service. And we who believe in the Heavenly Father undoubtingly and are well assured of the Heaven that lies about us and beyond, we are shamed in the feebleness of our service and the inconstancy of our obedience, by the heroic constancy of this man who was without those great inspiring certainties which lie at the heart of Christian faith. Let us learn from him that lesson of continuous quiet work with disciplined heart and spirit well-controlled, which *he* in his very boyhood learnt from his gaze on Nature's serene and tranquil constancy, and set forth in this, as it would seem, earliest of all his poems :— *Quiet Work*

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,
One lesson which in every wind is blown,
One lesson of two duties kept at one
Though the loud world proclaim their enmity.

Of *toil* unsever'd from *tranquillity* !
Of *labour*, that in lasting fruit outgrows
Far noisier schemes, accomplish'd *in repose*,
Too great for haste, too high for rivalry !

Yes, while on earth a thousand discords ring,
Man's fitful uproar mingling with his toil,
Still do thy sleepless ministers move on,

Their glorious tasks in silence perfecting ;
Still working, blaming still our vain turmoil,
Labourers that shall not fail, when man is gone.

VI.

ROBERT BROWNING :

FAITH TRIUMPHANT.

OUR six poets may be ranged in two groups, alternately selected. Shelley, Clough, Arnold: these prevailingly represent the spirit of criticism, be it by vehement revolt or by subtle questioning. Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning: these prevailingly represent the spirit of affirmation, be it affirmation of God here present now, or of man to live on with God hereafter. And there can be no question that these poets of affirmation, man for man, are greater than those poets of criticism; though Wordsworth had not in him the music that Shelley had, nor Browning the chastened sensitiveness to diction that Arnold had;—greater, therefore, not by the superiority of natural poetic gift, but by glow of the central fire. For magnificent conviction, the prophet's certainty of transcendent truth, it is this that makes man great, be it as poet or in any other calling that a man may fill. And if there be found any who will still maintain that Shelley out-tops these others, it will be not the critical element in Shelley that has

fundamentally convinced him, but his glowing affirmation of the beauty of the world and the ultimate ascendancy of love. Or if there be any who pleads that Matthew Arnold be relegated to no secondary rank, it will be, not the pervasive doubt that has taken him captive, but that brave confronting of all sadness and that call to duty which rings from his noblest lines. For always it is conviction that gives power; always it is proclamation of what is or shall be that moves and sways the souls of men.

And of all these six "makers"—to translate the grand old Greek name for a poet—of all these six, Robert Browning is pre-eminently the convinced, the sure, the unswerving, the affirmer, the proclaimer. And therefore, though inferior perhaps to all of them in music, rarely (though by no means never) giving us song-like flow of sound, and though (in spite of every protestation) indubitably given to obscurity and much harshness and intricacy of expression, yet by not a few, and they of trained and weighty judgment, he is ranked the greatest, the crowning glory, the pinnacle of nineteenth-century English poetry. It is because a man who, unswerving, undoubting, as though wrapt in the light of God, with the accents of one who knows and sees, declares sublime and inspiring truths, wields thereby a conse-

crated power over men such as no other can.

Browning's affirmations are prophetic: they have the ring of that immediate conviction which perceives intuitively, and does not merely build itself up by laborious processes of reason; but Browning is by no means a prophet only. He is a philosopher as well; probably the foremost as a philosopher of all our six. But his convictions do not spring originally from his philosophy. They were there in him, burning and inspiring, before his philosophy was formed. They are in "Pauline," his earliest, as much as in "Asolando," his latest poem. Not of him, as of Tennyson, are we to say,

At last he beat his music out.

His music was his from the first, the music of his intense and deep-toned faith. What he did "beat out" to finer and finer metal all through the years of his life was, so to speak, the theory of his music, the scientific counterpoint, the philosophy of faith.

For, deep and intuitive as was his faith, and ever triumphant over doubt and fear, his was not a mind that could live untouched by the searching questionings of his time. At bottom, he had no doubts of his own to face, but he was keenly alive to the doubts of others, and these he faced,

and learnt to understand and to sympathise with so far as was needful, in order to give them helpful answer. And so, many a doubter he has helped, as the strong swimmer who glories in the billowy sea and cannot drown stretches out a saving hand to him whom the waters threaten to overwhelm.

Browning, like Wordsworth, writes and thinks and feels on too vast a scale, and with too many subtle shades of difference, to be summed up in any lecture. A single address must pass by quite unnoted many even of his greater poems. We can only touch here and there a characteristic element of his gospel, and very broadly give him his place in our nineteenth century poesy. And I shall not attempt to estimate anything save his religious teaching, for indeed his theme is infinite—no other than the souls of men. And his peculiar gift is that he looks on souls from no outside point of view, but enters into them, and feels with them; knows all the turns and twists of feeling, all the hidden springs of action, all the subtle, complex conflict of emotions and of motives, by some strange, unique inspiration which seems to be his alone. Shakespeare details soul-stories, gives you the evolution of Othello or Macbeth, but he shows you those soul-tragedies mainly as they appear to others. Browning shows you them as

they seem to the soul itself. Both methods are equally true, but they are different. And it is Browning only that gives you all the self-deceptions and intricate, winding play of desire and thought, which is hidden from all the rest of the world,—and this equally with the bad and with the good, with the subtle and with the simple. He can think and feel with the innocent simplicity of Pompilia or of Pippa, no less than with the revengeful passions of Count Guido or the many-sided culture of the Pope who assigns Guido to his death. The development of the souls of men, said Browning, is “the only thing worth studying.” And the whole wide volume of his poems is a soul-museum. “His stage,” says one of his students, “is a point in the spiritual universe, where naked souls meet and wrestle, as they play the great game of life, for counters, the true value of which can only be realised in the bullion of a higher life than this.”

Browning's outward life presents singularly few points for comment. Born and bred in a South London suburb, his only collegiate training was a few lectures at University College in Gower Street, then just founded—a singularly unfruitful soil, one would think, for poets. In later life he used to say that Italy was his only university. But if Italy was his university, his father's old-fashioned garden and

Dulwich Woods were his school. Long night tramps he delighted in, with the stars peeping down through the foliage of the trees. Shelley—already some years dead—first woke in him full consciousness of his poetic destiny; and to Shelley—standing at the very pole of poetic method from himself—he always looked as the chief master who had helped to mould him. To have seen Shelley, to have spoken with him, ah! that would be, on the dreary track of life, as though traversing a dark and lonely moor one should cross in the midst one single strip of sunshine, and there pick up an eagle's feather and hide it in the breast.

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you?
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!


In early middle life there came to him the one transcendent event that bathed all his after years with its hue—that marriage with the sister poet that stands out in literary history beautiful, ideal, perfect. The wedded poets still pursued their separate paths of poesy with unbroken constancy to their distinct poetic leanings. But how much the joy of *his* love henceforward coloured *her* work we know by her "Sonnets from the Portuguese," that shy, glad gift from her overflowing heart;

and how much *her* love coloured *his* we know from the passionate faith with which he henceforth saturated his very thought of heaven and the eternal bliss with the everlasting companionship which should be his.

And then what more lovely incident is there in the history of literature than that exchange of notes between the two aged poets on Tennyson's eightieth birthday,—each veteran of soul too grandly built to harbour jealousy of the other's fame? Browning writes to Tennyson: "Let me say, I associate myself with the universal pride of our country in your glory—secure that your poetry will be a wonder and delight to all those appointed to come after; and for my own part, let me further say, I have loved you dearly." Tennyson replies: "I thank you with my whole heart and being for your noble letter, and with my whole heart and being I return your friendship."

Two supreme spiritual convictions seem to me to stand out as the very sum and substance of Browning's religion. The one is the absolute union of Power and Love in God; the other is the strenuous joy of the Life that is to be.

The absolute union of Power and Love in God. If a man hold that, then the light of it floods all his days, and no care can ever long depress, nor any sorrow slay.



We have in Browning's "Christmas Eve" the hint of how came to him the faith that the Supreme in power is no less the supreme in love. He is out under the driving breath of those Christmas skies, and he tells how

In youth I looked to those very skies,
And, probing their immensities,
I found God there, His visible *power* ;
Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
Of the *power*, an equal evidence
That His *love*, there too, was the nobler dower.
For the living worm within its clod
Were diviner than a loveless God
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.

And then, four or five years later, he and his wife three times went to see, at Fano, Guercino's picture of the Guardian Angel holding in his gentle clasp the hands of a little child to teach him how to pray; and he calls to that angel of God to hold his hands also, so that he, too, may have borne in on him that bright assurance of the heavenly love.

I would not look up thither past thy head
Because the door ope, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,
Thou bird of God! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garments
spread?

If this was ever granted, I would rest
My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands

Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought
expands,

Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired!

I think how I should view the earth and skies
and sea, when once again my brow was bared

After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it! All is beauty:
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.

What further may be sought for or declared?

If we are not fully persuaded even here
and now that the perfect power is also the
perfect love, it is but because here and
now we do not fully realise the power
itself. But by-and-by, in that nobler life
beyond, strenuous though still the strife
may be, we shall fully know the power,
and, knowing the power, then at last we
shall fully realise the love. And so, in
that "Reverie" of his, which was only
put into his hands in its printed form on
the day he died, in the closing weeks of
1889, he sings:—

Then life is—to wake not sleep,

Rise and not rest, but press
From earth's level where blindly creep

Things perfected, more or less,
To the heaven's height, far and steep,

Where, amid what strifes and storms

May wait the adventurous quest,
Power is Love—transports, transforms

Who aspired from worst to best,
Sought the soul's world, spurned the worms'.

I have faith such end shall be:
From the *first*, *Power* was—I knew,
Life has made clear to me
That, strive but for closer view,
Love were as plain to see.

When see? When there dawns a day,
If not on the homely earth,
Then yonder, worlds away,
Where the strange and new have birth,
And *Power* comes full in play.

But perhaps in that most magnificent
of the Dramatic Lyrics, "Saul," this
thought of the unity of *Power* and *Love*
in God is most victoriously preached.

David, the shepherd-boy, tells how
he was summoned by music of harp
and song to wean Saul from the stark
stupor into which his madness had cast
him.

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on
my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent
was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under
I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all
withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my
way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then
once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was
not afraid,
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And
no voice replied.

At the first I saw nought but the blackness ; but
soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the
vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion : and slow
into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of
all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,
showed Saul.
He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms
stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the centre, that
goes to each side ;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as,
caught in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king-serpent all
heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliver-
ance come
With the spring-time—so agonised Saul, drear
and stark, blind and dumb.

And he sang to Saul song after song—
tunes of the sheep, of the quails, of the
crickets—tunes of the harvest, of the
funeral, of the marriage—till a shudder
shook the head of Saul and the jewels in
his turban quivered ; but still his mighty
body was stretched against the tent-pole
stark and taut. Then David sang again,
and he chanted all the glories of kingdom
and the great destiny of Saul, till the beads
of sweat stood out on the monarch's brow,
and he moved and sat him there and gazed
with ineffable questionings into the face
of the shepherd-lad.

And a vast love flowed through David's heart, and in the depths of his soul he made search for words that should bring solace and courage to the king. If he, the shepherd-boy, could be stirred by such love as swept now through his being, then what of *God*? Surely God must have love too to give to Saul, surpassing his. And as lightning there flashed into him the prophetic knowledge that one day a face akin to his, because that of David's own far-off Son, should gaze into the eyes of Saul, and pour into him at last the solace and the strength which only the Son of God can give.

"I believe it! 'Tis thou, God, that givest, 'tis I
who receive:

"In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to
believe.

"All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as
prompt to my prayer

"As I breathe out this breath, as I open these
arms to the air.

* * * *

"Would I suffer for him that I love? So would'st
thou—so *will* thou!

"So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest,
uttermost crown—

"And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up
nor down

"One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by
no breath,

"Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins
issue with death!

"As *thy Love* is discovered almighty, almighty
be proved

- "Thy power, that exists with and for it, of *being Beloved* !
 "He who did most, shall bear most ! the strongest shall stand the most weak.
 "'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for ! my flesh, that I seek
 "In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
 "A Face like my face that receives thee ; a Man like to me,
 "Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever ; a Hand like this hand
 "Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee !
See the Christ stand !"

So much for the union in God of love and power. But I have said that *two* supreme spiritual convictions seem to me to stand out in Browning—the *one*, the absolute union of power and love in God ; the *other*, the strenuous joy of the life that is to be. Already, in the "Pauline," of his early youth, he foreshadows both convictions :—

I believe in God, and truth,
 And love
 But chiefly, when I die
 Know my last state is happy, free from doubt,
 Or touch of fear.

Again, in his early poem, "Paracelsus," he utters, in words which General Gordon declared had more often inspired him to conquer gloom than any others outside the Bible, this same great faith in the high life that is to be :

I shall arrive ! What time, what circuit first,


I ask not; but unless God send his hail
Or blinding fireballs, sleet or stifling snow,
In sometime, His good time, *I shall arrive*;
He guides me and the bird. In his good time.

Yes; for himself he knew, with that sure knowledge which is the prophet's more than the logician's, the seer's rather than the philosopher's, that *he should arrive* at that mode of being in which the power and the love are seen to be one perfection, and the soul moves in perfect harmony with both.

"The Grammarian's Funeral," "Abt Vogler," "Rabbi Ben Ezra," all dwell on this first life as the preparation, the ordained training-school, for that larger life of sublimer service.

"A Grammarian's Funeral" pictures the last obsequies of the simple scholar, all whose years had been given to the minute and patient study of forms of speech, small particles and enclitics, the lowliest tools of language. There were those who thought that a wasted life, nothing achieved. But the Grammarian's soul measured life not by the scale of the earthly span, but by the years of eternity, and to him it seemed that there was an infinite store of time, so that seven short decades was not too long to spend in humblest preparation of his tools.

And so, as the procession winds up the mountain steep, that they may lay his



bones in the shining citadel of the mountain-peak, they recall the answer with which he ever met his critics :

Others mistrust and say, " But time escapes ;
Live now or never ! "

He said, " What's time ? Leave now for dogs
and apes !

Man has Forever."

* * * *

Was it not great ? did not he throw on God
(He loves the burthen)—

God's task to make the heavenly period
Perfect the earthen ?

Did not he magnify the mind, show clear
Just what it all meant ?

He would not discount life, as fools do here,
Paid by instalment.

He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success
Found, or earth's failure :

" Wilt thou trust death or not ? " He answered
" Yes."

One man strives to complete the round
of his achievement here on earth ; another
plans his task upon the grand scale of the
life eternal.

That, has the world here—should he need the
next,

Let the world mind him !

This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
Seeking shall find him.

So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,
Ground he at grammar ;

Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife :
While he could stammer.

In Abt Vogler, the musician, the allegory is not of grammar which shall be

built up into the perfect language, but of melodies and harmonies which, though they vanish on the air, can never die. It does not suffice him to know that other and different music manifold shall come after that which he has made. He must know that his own very music shall live for ever.

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name?

Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!

What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?

Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power expands?

There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;

The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;

What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;

On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;

Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,

Are music sent up to God by the lover and the
bard;
Enough that HE heard it once; WE shall hear
it by-and-by.

To one whose being throbs with this
glorious faith, the advance of age is no
signal of decaying powers, but rather the
ever fuller preparation for the splendid
powers of the life eternal. And so begin
the noble stanzas of Rabbi Ben Ezra :—

Grow old along with me !
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made :
Our times are in His hand
Who saith, " A whole I planned,
" Youth shows but half ; trust God : see all, nor
be afraid ! "

And presently again :—

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term :
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute ; a god though in the
germ.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new :
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapons to select, what armour to indue.

Seize then the ancient metaphor of the
Potter's Wheel. From youth to age the
cup is being shaped and graven. Then in

the life hereafter the chalice shall be consecrated to the Master's lips.

Ay, note that Potter's wheel,
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay,—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone,
seize to-day!"

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but *thy soul* and *God* stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay
endure.

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Scully-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down but up!
To *uses* of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips a-glow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what need'st
thou with earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldedest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I,—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colours rife,
Bound dizzily,—mistake my end, to slake Thy
thirst:

So, take and use Thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the
aim!

My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the
same!

And so to Browning's thinking there was no death. "Why, *amico mio*," said he, as he laid his hand on the knee of his friend, "you know as well as I that death is life. . . . Never say of me that I am dead."

"She is not dead, but sleepeth," said Jesus in the beautiful old story. "She is not dead, but waketh," rather, I think, would Browning say of the soul that has cast off the robe of flesh. For himself, he knew that the moment of death might be a moment of pain and of spasm, But what of that? A minute of pain, and then, boundless beyond, the love of his heart restored, and the service of God for ever!

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,

When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
 I am nearing the place,
 The power of the night, the press of the storm,
 The post of the foe;
 Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
 Yet the strong man must go :
 For the journey is done and the summit attained,
 And the barriers fall,
 Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be
 gained,
 The reward of it all.
 I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
 The best and the last !
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and
 forbore,
 And bade me *creep* past.
 No ! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my
 peers
 The heroes of old,
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
 Of pain, darkness and cold.
 For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minute's at end,
 And the elements' rage, the fiend voices that rave,
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of
 pain,
 Then a light, then thy breast,
 O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee again,
 And with God be the rest !

And as epilogue, not to "Asolando"
 only, but to all his writings, glows that last
 utterance of an indomitable spirit, with its
 thrill of welcome to the life of nobler war-
 fare and sublimer service.

It is a remonstrance of the dying man
 against any pity mingling with the love
 for him when he is gone.

At the midnight in the silence of the sleeptime,
 When you set your fancies free,
 Will they pass to where—by death, fools think,
 imprisoned—
 Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you
 loved so,
 —Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken !
 What had *I* on earth to do
 With the slothful, with the mawkish, the un-
 manly ?
 Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drive!—
 Being—who ?

One who never turned his back but marched
 breast forward,
 Never doubted clouds would break,
 Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong
 would triumph,
 Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
 Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's worktime
 Greet the unseen with a cheer !
 Bid him forward, breast and back as either should
 be,
 " Strive and thrive ! " cry " Speed,—fight on, fare
 ever
 There as here ! "

Without the shadow of disparagement
 of the calm and beautiful faith of Tenny-
 son, we cannot but feel that here is a yet
 robuster faith. Dim and shadowy by
 comparison is the assurance which the
 elder poet won at last out of the mystery
 of sorrow :

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

To this is Browning's ringing song of faith triumphant as a clarion-note to the tremulous whisper of a flute. They both are music. But while Tennyson gently soothes our sorrow, hushes our fear, and wins us to a quiet trust, Browning teaches our pulse to throb and our heart to leap in exulting eagerness for that more splendid and heroic life which is to be.

And so, men and women, we have sat at the feet of these six chosen poets of the century whose sands are so nearly run, and we find them all with wistful iteration handling the great problems of life and death, of God and man, weighing assurance and doubt in the scales of the soul,—Clough with well-nigh despair, Arnold with brave but mournful doubt, Shelley with passionate revolt yet prophetic ring of hope; Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning with a deep and profound assurance that

God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world.

Do you note that Shelley alone—away back eighty years—finds it worth while to talk of those schemes of theology which

